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Too Green To Know Any Better?

Ways To Bridge Teaching's Generation Gap

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Nevada teachers John Wallace and Jena Augspurger

NEA Today

November 1998
Volume 17, Number 3

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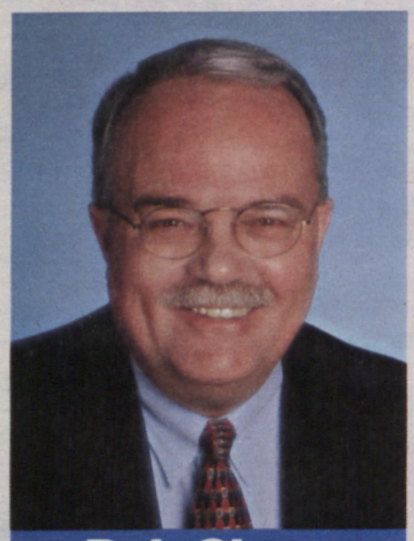
A New Deal for New Teachers

President's Viewpoint

Time to stop "hazing" new teachers with the toughest kids, hardest classes, and worst facilities.



Bob Chase

NEA member Harry McDonald has taught biology at Blue Valley High School in Stilwell, Kansas, for 25 years. During that time, he has become increasingly concerned about the way new teachers are treated.

"New teachers have lost out in the 'rank has its privileges' culture of our schools," he wrote me earlier this year.

And so this past September, McDonald embarked on a one-man crusade to help rookie teachers. He asked Blue Valley's principal to assign his classroom to a new colleague and to let McDonald himself do the "have cart, will travel" routine instead.

McDonald also gave up his coveted last-period planning session so that a new teacher who coaches could have it. And he asked to mentor three new biology teachers.

As a result, McDonald reports, "Our whole department seems energized with a new spirit of sharing."

There has been a lot of talk lately about "healing the breach"—whether it's in reference to uniting communities or restoring the trust between politicians and the public.

As an association, NEA understands the importance of reaching across fault lines—of working cooperatively with administrators, parents, businesses, and legislators. We know that if we can't build bridges, we can't strengthen schools, either.

Yet too often, we overlook a gap that exists between our very own members: between veteran educators and beginners.

I believe we would be wise to draw inspiration from Harry McDonald. For while new teachers have always felt overwhelmed, the problems they face today are exponentially greater than the ones we veterans faced 10 or 20 or 30 years ago. To succeed, this new generation of teachers requires greater support from our state and local Associations—as well as a willingness among "elder" colleagues to share our professional expertise and privileges.

A new teacher, Mathew Gay, said to me recently, "New teachers are being hazed." Gay is an English teacher now in his third year of teaching in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. But he started out at a school in Maryland, where a chronically troubled student hurled a chair at him across the room during a quiz.

> "This new generation craves our professional expertise as much as our union muscle."

Gay ushered the student out of the building, but the youth was returned to his classroom five days later. The incident was part of what prompted Gay to relocate.

"New teachers are given the worst kids, the worst classes," he said. "Trial by fire is not the best way to cultivate teachers. It's like we're set up to fail."

Across the country, an estimated two million new teachers will be needed in the next 10 years to keep pace with soaring enrollments and to replace the large cohort of teachers nearing retirement. Chances are, many of these new teachers are going to be facing circumstances similar to Gay's their first year. If we're going to attract and retain quality educators, we need to offer them a new deal.

How do we do this?

- Along with better salaries, NEA members must work to ensure that beginning teachers receive better training—particularly in managing their classrooms, teaching students of varied abilities, and dealing with the challenges posed by mainstreaming.
- We must advocate for across-the-board mentoring and continual professional development.
- We must recognize, as Harry McDonald did, that it behooves each of us to challenge the system of class assignments that permeates so many public schools today.
- We must recognize that new teachers today want so much more in addition to collective bargaining. Besides salaries, professional development tops their list of priorities. A call for "union organizing" doesn't compel them to become active in their locals—the prospect of "networking" does.

Jason Hartman, a new teacher at Fairview Elementary in Mora, Minnesota, told me, "For me and my generation, a union should be an educators' assistance and resource team."

And Mathew Gay observed, "Young teachers are generally single and healthy with no kids. Pensions are so far removed for us. What we're interested in are salaries, safe schools, smaller class sizes, and whether NEA can help us now, in the classroom."

Indeed, this new generation craves our professional expertise as much as our union muscle. By being generous, flexible, and open-minded, seasoned members of NEA can reach out to our newly-minted colleagues and "heal the breach." And we must.

NEA at a Glance

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Did You Know...
NEA is working with affiliates in five states—California, Hawaii, Arizona, Connecticut, and Colorado—to sponsor public charter schools designed by NEA members. The goal: to pioneer imaginative new approaches to instruction that offer insights to all public schools and to educators nationwide. For more information, send E-mail to rmcclure@nea.org.

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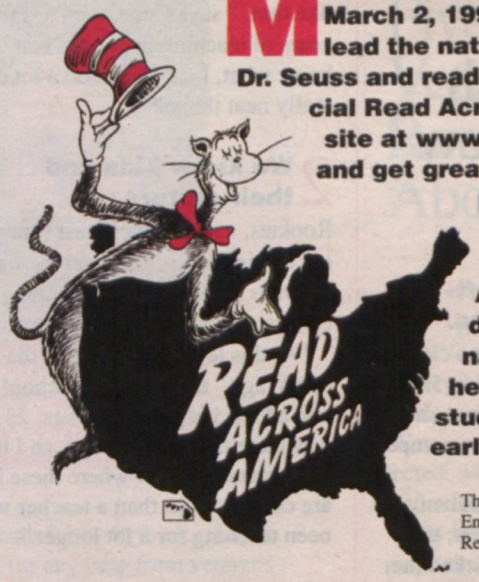
NEA Today November '98

The Cat Is Back!



Mark your calendars: Tuesday, March 2, 1999, NEA again will lead the nation in celebrating Dr. Seuss and reading. Visit the official Read Across America Web site at www.nea.org/readacross and get great new ideas for planning reading celebrations in your community. And stay tuned for details on NEA's national effort to help you get your students reading, early and often.

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Cover Story

4 Generation Gap
Are you closer to retirement or high school? Bob Dylan or Kurt Cobain? In teaching, Boomers like Beverly Wickel (left) and Gen Xers like Carrie Waters have their differences, but they've got one thing in common: the kids. On pages 4-5, find out what veterans and rookies think about each other and get advice on how to bridge the gap. On page 6, take *NEA Today*'s eye-opening, door-opening test of intergenerational knowledge.

Cover photo by Bob Riha, Jr.

Newsmakers

7 On Capitol Hill
The federal law that supports K-12 education is up for renewal. If your school gets federal funds, you need to read this.

8 At the Bargaining Table
Does your contract reflect the needs and wishes of today's members? A new tool from NEA can help you find out.

9 On the Cutting Edge
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10 In the States
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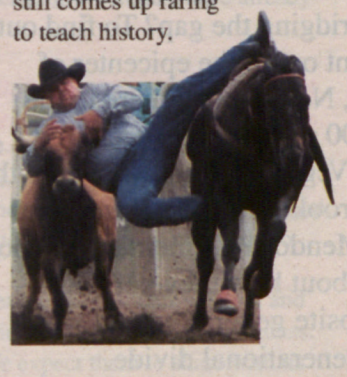

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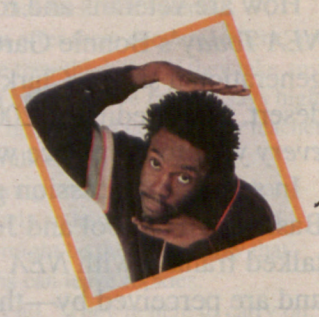

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A look at what's happening with vouchers in Milwaukee. Will it happen in your town, too? Plus, your letters.

The Genera

Young teachers say, 'Why can't *they* try something new?' Seasoned teachers say, '*They* think they know everything already.' Who's right—and who's wrong—in your school?

In 1976, when Jena Augspurger was born, John Wallace was already in his third year of teaching. Now, in 1998, the two are colleagues at Nevada's Basic High School. Wallace—who knew Augspurger when she was a student at Basic High just four years ago—has to get used to thinking of her as a professional colleague. And Augspurger, for her part, is trying to get comfortable calling former teachers by their first names.

Welcome to education's great generational divide. All across the United States, twenty-somethings like Jena Augspurger are joining staffs of grizzled Baby Boomers just like John Wallace.

Schools, of course, have always mixed rookies and veterans. But two factors make today's generation gap distinctive:

■ *Sheer volume.* Retirements and rising enrollments will bring 2 million brand-new teachers into the profession over the next decade.

■ *Celebrity demography.* Today's generation gap involves America's two most celebrated and maligned demographic groups. Most newly minted teachers, those born between 1965 and 1978, are members of Generation X, while most veteran educators are products of the 1946-64 Baby Boom.

The gap between these two generations is more than bifocals vs. Oakleys. Xers and Boomers are finding that teaching approaches and knowledge bases—not to mention values, attitudes, and life experiences—often just don't mesh.

How are veterans and rookies bridging the gap? To find out, *NEA Today*'s Bonnie Gardner went out to the epicenter of generational shift—Clark County, Nevada. Out there in the desert, an incredible 1,200 to 1,800 new teachers are hired *every year* to keep pace with Las Vegas's phenomenal growth.

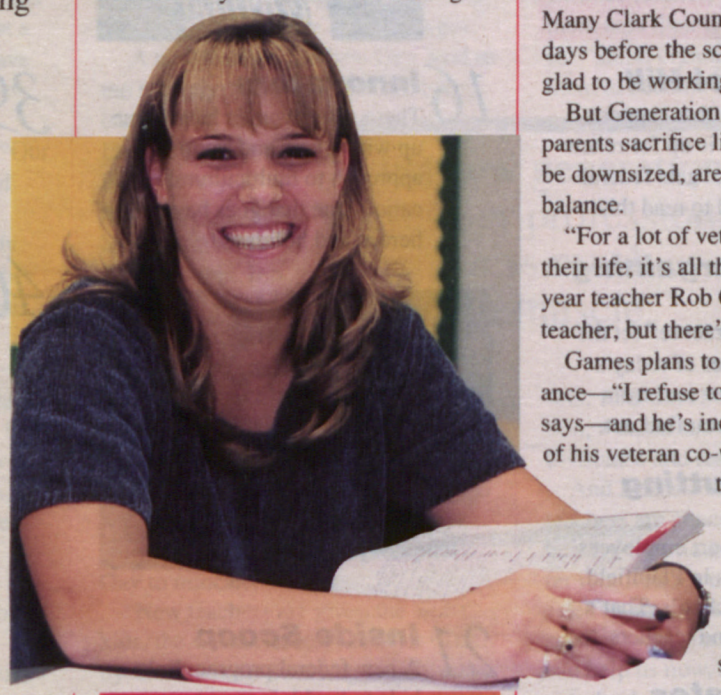
In separate discussion groups, rookies and veterans from Basic High School and John F. Mendoza Elementary School talked frankly with *NEA Today* about how they perceive—and are perceived by—their opposite generation and what they're doing to cross the great generational divide.

Five Things Rookies Wish Veterans Knew About Them

1 We're not fond of left-handed compliments.

Veterans think rookies "have no clue," says high school English teacher Jill Cone—and are surprised when their young colleagues turn out to be competent.

"When I do get positive comments from more experienced teachers, they say, 'Oh, my God, you've shocked me, you've knocked me right off my feet. I had no clue you could do something like that,'" says Cone, who has three years of teaching under her belt. "You know what, I can! I can do a lot of really neat things!"



Carrie Waters, first-year teacher

2 We know kids and their culture.

Rookies, some of them just four years out of high school themselves, can help veterans decipher students' slang, pop culture references, and fashions.

"At this level, I'm close to the students' age," explains high school special ed teacher Carrie Waters, 23. "I was there not too long ago, so I think I understand more of where these kids are coming from than a teacher who's been teaching for a lot longer."

3 There's more to life than teaching.

Many Clark County rookies, hired just days before the school year began, are glad to be working.

But Generation Xers, who watched parents sacrifice lives to careers only to be downsized, are demanding more balance.

"For a lot of veterans, teaching is their life, it's all they have," says first-year teacher Rob Games. "Yes, I am a teacher, but there's more to life."

Games plans to work hard at balance—"I refuse to get stressed out," he says—and he's incredulous that some of his veteran co-workers fret about their plans for December holiday activities in early September. "I ask them, 'Why are you killing yourself?'" he says.

4 We really do appreciate your help . . .

Rookies know that college didn't pre-

Tips for Bridging the Gap

If rookies and veterans are divided into two camps at your school, how can you get the two groups to pull their tents closer together? Here are some ideas, formal and informal, for bridging the generation gap.

■ At Mendoza Elementary in Clark County, Nevada, teachers in the same grade level all have the same prep period. Once a week, they use this time for a grade-wide meeting to share concerns. Just having this time to interact, agree rookies and veterans alike, helps keep the generation gap at bay.

■ Mendoza Elementary's veterans complement this formal arrangement with lots of walking and talking.

"I visit new teacher classrooms a lot," says fourth-grade teacher Sue Miric, a 26-year veteran. "I like to go before and after school and just ask how things are going. If they have a question or problem, I'll tell them what I think."

Adds Miric: "I'm always amazed that once they talk it out, they seem to come up with good solutions."

■ When Michael Metzler taught at Wheaton Warrenville South High School in Illinois, he instituted "Rookies Cookies," an after-school meeting required for new teachers. The idea: to get newbies together with "young veterans"—those with two to five years of experience—for some frank talk about how the school "really works."

Young veterans were perfect for the program, Metzler says, because "they've been at the school long enough to have a handle on the ins and outs, but they're not so seasoned that they lack the empathy and understanding of what that first year is like."

■ Veterans in Posey County, Indiana, present first-year teachers with a

tion Gap

Five Things Veterans Wish Rookies Knew About Them

Photos by Jim Decker

Rob Games, first-year teacher

pare them for everything. They're happy for any help from veterans—especially tips for managing time, paperwork, and student behavior.

"I learned more from veterans in two weeks than in four years of college," Games proclaims. Says second-year teacher Jill Fleming: "Veterans knew I was coming straight out of college, and they really took care of me."

5 But dole it out in bite-sized pieces, please.

"Veterans overwhelm us," says third-year teacher Brenda Miller, whose seasoned colleagues like to shower her with lesson plans and ideas for everything from math to social studies.

Not that she's complaining, but "bring it on real slow," she advises, "because we're just being overwhelmed with paperwork, rules, and procedures."

Gertrude Scruggs, 30 years of experience

1 What you see isn't always what you get.

"New teachers walk down the hall bubbly," says Shelley Wise, a first grade teacher with 19 years experience. "Veterans walk down calm and collected, which makes new teachers think we've lost our spark."

But behind classroom doors, Wise maintains, veterans generate plenty of electricity.

"We've been walking the halls for so many years, we seem too calm, but that masks our true personalities," she explains. "The more that new teachers get to know me, the more they say, 'Uh, I didn't know you were like that!'"

2 Trust us when we say your idea won't work.

Veterans love rookies' enthusiasm for new ideas—but often feel accused of throwing a big, wet blanket when they try to dissuade new teachers from repeating their own youthful mistakes.

"When new teachers mention something they want to try, and we say we tried that and it didn't work very successfully, they often don't question why it didn't work—or even acknowledge that we probably did try it," says high school English teacher Beverly Wickel.

Instead, she says, rookies maintain an attitude of "Well, we think this is going to work, therefore it will."

But, seasoned teachers lament, sticking with proven successes often gets them labeled as stuck in the past.

"As a veteran teacher, I do what I found has worked, not necessarily what is in vogue or old-fashioned," says second grade teacher Kathrine Lee. "I just wish new teachers could see some of that progression."

3 We didn't spring fully formed from the forehead of Zeus.

Many rookies think veterans set their teaching styles early in their careers—sometime back in the Dark Ages—and haven't changed since, says high school English teacher Judi Hamblin.

"They don't understand that we've changed many times in the many years we've been here," she says.

In her 27-year career, Hamblin adds, she has seen educational theories and practices recycled over and over, gussied up with new jargon. What rookies learn in college as cutting edge ideas, she says, are often things she and her fellow veterans have already tried.

4 We're still learning—and we want your new ideas.

As 30-year veteran Gertrude Scruggs puts it, "Once you become ripened, like the apple, the next day some think you just rot. Well, I'm not ready to rot."

In exchange for their wisdom and experience, veterans want new ideas.

"We expect them to share with us the new ideas they've discovered. We're still learning," says teacher Brenda Nielsen. "Every teacher tries to learn something new every day."

Beverly Wickel, 19 years of experience

Adds Phyllis Morton, who has spent 50 years in the classroom: "When young teachers come in with a new skill, boy, do I lob on and say 'Teach me! teach me!'

"If I taught the same way now that I did in the 1950s, it wouldn't be any good for the kids," she explains.

5 We're here to help, really we are.

Veterans want to get rookies off to a good start in the profession. Whatever they can pass on—tips, materials, and advice—is there for the new teachers' taking.

But rookies, veterans say, often seem fiercely determined to make their own way. Many rely on each other instead of turning to their seasoned colleagues—and that frustrates veterans.

"You offer them encouragement, and it's like they think that if they take any type of help, they've failed," says high school history and government teacher John Wallace.

Clearing away the obstacles that make help so hard to receive—and give—might be the best legacy that veterans can leave rookies.

After all, "They're here to carry on," says 30-year veteran Sandra Thomas.

"goodie bag"—filled with grading pens, highlighters, stickers, note pads, and even a bottle of aspirin—and spend time getting to know the new teachers. This helps rookies get off to a well-stocked start—and opens the door for more conversation, says NEA member and Marrs Elementary School teacher Terri Branson, a 22-year veteran.

■ At California's Berkeley High School, says teacher Annie Johnston, faculty helped turn around a "very bad older teacher/new teacher dynamic" with a professional development series that emphasizes staff expertise, not age.

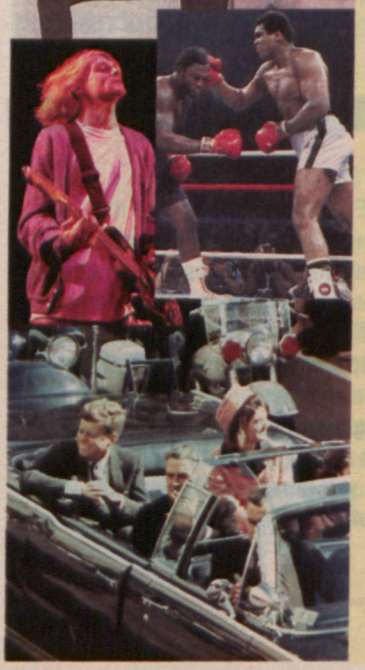
Berkeley teachers nominated by their colleagues for their success with students of color were asked to lead a summer in-service and workshops during the school year. Age barriers came down as even first-year teachers taught some of the workshops.

"We've been able to highlight the strengths of a wide variety of teachers," Johnston says. Now veterans and rookies acknowledge that they have much to learn from each other.

■ Having trouble getting the intergenerational dialogue going in your school? You'll find lots of ideas for reaching out to colleagues in *Peer Support: Teachers Mentoring Teachers,* a book just published by the NEA Professional Library (Stock #2913-5-00-F. $9.95 for NEA members, $12.95 for non-members). To order, just call 800/229-4200.

NEA will be working hard this year to develop all sorts of new resources to help new teachers succeed. Already in distribution is NEA's New Member CD-ROM. Watch *NEA Today* for details on upcoming new materials.

Need an ice breaker to help span the generation gap? Turn the page to take a fun quiz that'll require rookies and veterans to put their heads together.



NEA Today's Intergenerational Quiz

How well can you bridge the generation gap? Whether you're more familiar with "South Park" or Bert Parks, you'll find some of these questions a breeze. But if other questions have you scratching your head, help is available right in your school. Hang this quiz in your faculty lounge and invite rookies and veterans to pitch in to answer it. Then, just keep that intergenerational conversation going all year long.

1. Lilith, Lollapalooza, and Further are:
- ☐ record labels
- ☐ names of magazines
- ☐ rock festivals

2. In "The Graduate," Benjamin was advised to go into:
- ☐ plastics
- ☐ computers
- ☐ teaching

3. Who has been married to Amanda?
- ☐ Peter
- ☐ Billy
- ☐ Jake

4. Who sued for palimony?
- ☐ Susan St. James
- ☐ Jacqueline Susann
- ☐ Michelle Marvin

5. The 1987 stock market crash is often called
- ☐ Black Friday
- ☐ Black Monday
- ☐ The Big Correction

6. The Saturday Night Massacre was:
- ☐ a key episode in Watergate
- ☐ a 1973 organized crime war in New York City
- ☐ a 1974 heavyweight title fight

7. The Menendez Brothers' names are:
- ☐ Kyle and Kenny
- ☐ Lyle and Erik
- ☐ Niles and Fraiser

8. Who was not on the 1969 bill at Woodstock?
- ☐ Country Joe & the Fish
- ☐ Richie Havens
- ☐ Rolling Stones

9. The campaign to engage young voters in the 1992 presidential election was called:
- ☐ Rock the Vote
- ☐ Choose or Lose
- ☐ One Voice

10. How many clear copies can you make off the average master ditto?
- ☐ 50
- ☐ 200
- ☐ 500

11. "Brat Pack" bad boy Rob Lowe was in which of these seminal '80s films?
- ☐ "The Breakfast Club"
- ☐ "St. Elmo's Fire"
- ☐ "Sixteen Candles"

12. Who was the first American in space?
- ☐ Alan Shepard
- ☐ John Glenn
- ☐ Neil Armstrong

13. Boy George fronted which '80s new wave band?
- ☐ The Human League
- ☐ Eurythmics
- ☐ Culture Club

14. Who owned a nice Republican cloth coat?
- ☐ Happy Rockefeller
- ☐ Mamie Eisenhower
- ☐ Pat Nixon

15. Which President submitted the first trillion-dollar budget?
- ☐ Ronald Reagan
- ☐ George Bush
- ☐ Bill Clinton

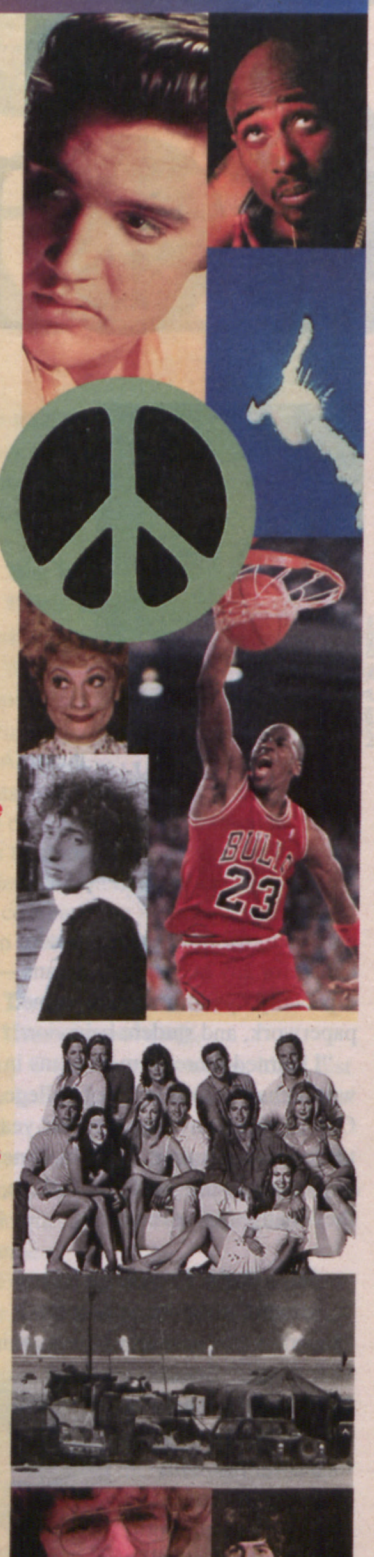
16. What branch of the military did Elvis serve in?
- ☐ Army
- ☐ Navy
- ☐ Air Force

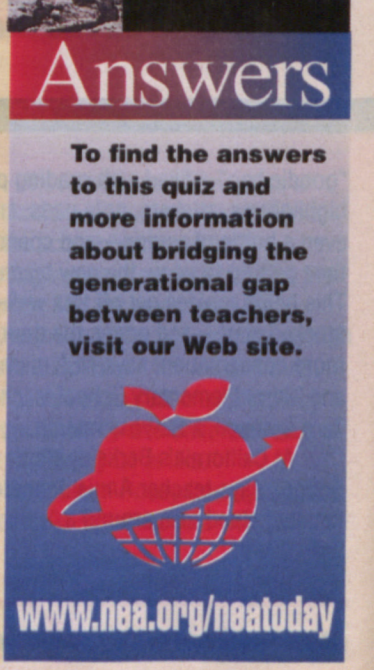
17. What is "spam"?
- ☐ A tasty pork product
- ☐ Pesky unsolicited E-mail
- ☐ Both a and b

18. "Heatwave" was a hit for:
- ☐ Mary Wells
- ☐ Martha & the Vandellas
- ☐ The Marvelettes

19. Who wrote *Less Than Zero*?
- ☐ Bret Easton Ellis
- ☐ Jay McInerney
- ☐ Douglas Coupland

20. *Soul on Ice* sparked hot debate on racism in American life. Its author was:
- ☐ Angela Davis
- ☐ Eldridge Cleaver
- ☐ Julian Bond





Answers

To find the answers to this quiz and more information about bridging the generational gap between teachers, visit our Web site.

www.nea.org/neatoday

On Capitol Hill

A Law You Can't Ignore

The federal law that supports K-12 education is up for renewal—and one of your programs is at stake.

If you haven't heard of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the main artery through which federal funds flow to public K-12 schools, you'd better read on. ESEA may be in trouble—and you can help save it and the programs it supports.

Here's what you need to know.

■ **The Elementary and Secondary Education Act affects every public school district.** ESEA "authorizes" the vast majority of federal K-12 programs, including, among others, Title I, the Eisenhower professional development grants, bilingual education, impact aid, and school infrastructure improvement.

In addition, ESEA funds efforts to achieve safe and drug-free schools, put more technology in education, help magnet schools, and educate gifted and talented children.

You can't ignore ESEA's impact on your school—be it funds for a reading aide, a workshop on math instruction strategies, or an after-school program.

"There's not one public school in the country that this legislation doesn't affect," says NEA chief lobbyist Dale Lestina. "NEA was active in its passage back in 1965—when President Lyndon Johnson, a former teacher, promoted education as the pathway out of poverty—and we've played a big role in ESEA's design ever since."

When Congress last expanded and improved ESEA in 1994, NEA helped reshape the statute from a top-down, fill-the-gap funding law to a tool for leveraging state and local school restructuring efforts aligned to high standards.

Because Congress listened to professional educators, the current ESEA coordinates federal education programs at the state and local levels, and focuses resources on these four key elements of education improvement: high standards for all students, training for teachers to teach to high standards, flexibility to implement local reforms, and close partnerships among families, communities, and schools.

■ **ESEA really works.** While underfunded across the board, ESEA programs are making a difference for kids and schools. Some examples:

➤ In Jefferson County, Kentucky, Title I funds a successful early childhood literacy program in four elementary schools and boosts parental involvement in decision-making.

Eisenhower professional development funds prepare teachers to help students meet state and national standards in mathematics—and integrate technology like graphing calculators and software into instruction.

➤ In Kalamazoo, Michigan, Title I has enabled the district to spend $8 million on class size reduction and leverage additional resources for site-based planning and schoolwide programs.

Lisa Waddell

With support from federal Title I funds, NEA member and Memphis instructional facilitator Frankie Morris helped boost students' scores on a statewide reading test.

■ **Many members of Congress want to gut ESEA.** The Elementary and Secondary Education Act is up for reauthorization in the new, 106th Congress, which convenes in January. Proponents of privatization and private school tuition vouchers are already sharpening their knives.

On their wish list: conversion of Title I into a multibillion-dollar private school tuition voucher program for the poor, repeal of targeted uses of programs in favor of disbursement of ESEA funds through block grants to states—without quality controls—and merit pay and periodic testing for all classroom teachers.

■ **NEA wants ESEA to work even better.** During the reauthorization process, NEA will strive to keep ESEA focused on student achievement, teacher quality, and school system capacity, while pushing a "proactive" agenda of change, says NEA lobbyist Adele Robinson.

"We'll advocate for the use of ESEA funds to implement proven, research-based programs—in areas like reading and math instruction and professional development," Robinson stresses.

"We'll also push," she adds, "for more support for new teachers and incentives to stop the practice of issuing emergency certifications and assigning people to teach out of their field."

What You Can Do

In the lobbying process, says NEA's Adele Robinson, "We must make the case that ESEA programs are critical—and that there's a viable federal role in K-12 education."

Only NEA members like you can make that happen. If you have an anecdote about a successful activity that was wholly or partially funded by ESEA—especially through Title I, the Eisenhower professional development, technology, and safe and drug-free school programs—E-mail to Robinson at ARobinson@nea.org.

In your message, describe what you did with the ESEA money, how it made a difference for your students, and what would have gone undone without federal support.

For more on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, go to http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA.

Heroes & Zeroes

Great things do happen to great people. Like teacher Barbara Kelley, a union leader in Bangor, Maine. She's elected chair of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards *and* wins $25,000 from the Milken Foundation. "My sons wanted cars and computers," Kelley says, "but the money's going to tuition. Everybody understands the concerns of two teachers trying to put two kids through college."

A screeching flat tire to the Car Guys, NPR's chatty brother duo, for gratuitous teacher-bashing on their Web site. They write: "The people who do the teaching are—for the most part—egomaniacs who don't have the faintest idea of what education should be all about." Revved up for a response? Go to http://cartalk.cars.com/About/Education and tell the "Tappett Brothers" to stick to manual transmissions.

A plate of lasagna to Garfield the Cat and cartoonist Jim Davis—big boosters of K-12 education in Indiana. In two years, the sale of license plates with Garfield's picture on them has raised $1 million for public schools in the Hoosier state—and that's not catnip!

Think fast: You're chaperoning an overnight field trip and your principal orders you to sleep in the same room with students. What do you do? If you're Illinois teacher Jim Siemer—or anyone else with common sense—you refuse. Now Siemer and his Association are fighting charges of insubordination. They expect an arbitrator's decision in December.

A big hand for the Ad Council's new international campaign, "Give a Kid a Hand." Urging folks all over the world to lend their time and expertise to children, the print and TV ads will air as public service announcements all over the world. For details, go to the Web at www.giveakidahand.org.

At the Bargaining Table

Board Buries Bargaining

Last year, the school board in North Little Rock, Arkansas, unilaterally withdrew recognition from the local NEA affiliate, choosing instead to deal with a powerless "Personnel Policy Committee."

This year, the board voted to replace the Association contract—bargained over 20 years—with a document that scraps arbitration, narrows the list of grievable issues, and limits Association rights to represent teachers.

What you can do: *Link collective bargaining to teacher professionalism and quality education in a letter to the editor of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 121 East Capitol Ave., Little Rock, AR 72201.*

New Voice for Teachers

Members of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association have ratified a two-year contract that provides a 2.5 percent increase in 1997-1998 and at least $798 in 1998-99, and boosts retirement benefits for teachers aged 55 to 65 who retire with 30 or more years of service.

Under the agreement, each school will be empowered to fill teacher vacancies next year without regard to seniority—by an interview team consisting of an on-site administrator, teachers, and at least one parent. Teachers at the school will elect colleagues to the team, and teachers will comprise a majority of the team.

No Picnic on Labor Day

On Labor Day, members of the Vandalia Unit (Illinois) Teachers Association weren't home flipping burgers on the grill. Instead, all 150 of them were visiting neighbors to explain how the school board had forced them out on strike.

The resulting furor from taxpayers forced the board to nearly *double* its "final" offer to teachers.

After five days on strike, the teachers ratified a two-year contract providing two annual raises of 4 percent on the established salary schedule. "That's a good settlement for this part of Illinois," says UniServ Director Marcus Albrecht.

Taking the Members' Pulse

Ellen Banner

New Unionism pioneers in Edmonds, Washington, include, from left to right: Donna Fish, Dave Scott, Mary Baxter, and Chris Huddleson.

New Unionism means new reliance on member feedback. A new tool from NEA makes it easier.

Like many veteran teachers, NEA local leader Dave Scott viewed the right to transfer based on seniority as a safeguard against patronage and cronyism.

But lately he'd heard rumblings that many members wanted to help select new hires who'd fit in with their school's philosophy, not just accept all transfers based on seniority.

That took Scott out of his "comfort zone." But he didn't turn away.

As president of the Edmonds Education Association in Washington State, Scott was proud of the many aspects of New Unionism he and his local have been able to achieve in the last 10 years—most notably trust between teachers and administrators, decision-making and direct spending at the building level, and more communication all around.

"We surveyed the members," Scott notes, "and 70 percent said that seniority should not determine transfers. So we bargained new language reflecting that sentiment."

When there's an opening, people on a building selection team "use whatever process they establish to choose among applicants," Scott says. "If a team wants to use seniority, it can."

But while honoring the majority's wishes, this local also pays for new members to attend credit courses on the history and accomplishments of the Association.

"There has to be dialogue," stresses Scott. "Younger folks need to know the thinking behind traditional points of view on issues like seniority."

Dialogue—lots of it—is what makes New Unionism work for EEA.

"Every couple of years," says Scott, "our building reps interview a random sample of one-third of the membership—and we develop a bargaining survey based on those one-on-one meetings."

In January, NEA local affiliates will gain another useful tool for taking members' pulse. That's when NEA will roll out a new, eight-part Bargaining Priorities Survey for K-12 teachers.

Drafted and tested in cooperation with NEA state affiliates and UniServ staff, the survey—made up of eight "modules" on issues ranging from professional development to staff involvement in schools—aims to help local affiliate negotiators in both bargaining and non-bargaining states.

Each module is highly detailed and can stand alone, allowing a local bargaining team to confine its polling to, say, benefits and job protections.

The new survey, which will be available from each NEA state affiliate, is "general enough for all locals to use," says NEA staffer Kathy Tuck, "yet specific enough for them to really delve into the member's mindset."

How specific? The professional development module gauges member views on topics like opportunities to collaborate with other teachers during school hours and "training on using technology for classroom instruction."

NEA, Tuck says, can counsel local affiliates on "which survey modules to use, the kind of information to gather, and how to sample and do a census."

Generally, within three weeks of receipt of a local's completed surveys, NEA can scan the forms, tabulate results, and run a data report.

"The process is simple and helps locals collect valid information about the interests and priorities of a good cross-section of members," Tuck points out. "And it helps locals without resources and experience develop an ongoing research program."

Good deal. But not the whole deal.

Tuck warns that locals can't take survey shortcuts or neglect to ensure a high rate of member response. "Otherwise," Tuck says, "the survey will only include the disgruntled and the happy—and not the average member."

For More Information

For more about the Trust Agreement in Edmonds, Washington, go to www.nea.org/neatoday. For more on NEA's Bargaining Priorities Survey, E-mail Kathy Tuck at KTuck@nea.org or call her at 202/822-7402.

The Bottom Line

Free tuition: Maryland Governor Parris Glendening is proposing that his state forgive the college tuition costs for students who agree to teach in Maryland for at least five years. Students would be expected to maintain a *B* average.

Troops to Teachers: The five-year-old federal program that offers stipends to retired military personnel who seek certification to teach is slated to be phased out by next October. The program has helped over 3,000 military retirees become teachers.

Get out the lead: Legislation banning and limiting lead in paint and gasoline has had an enormously positive impact of children's health. The percentage of at-risk young kids with elevated lead blood levels has dropped from 88 to 6 percent since 1979.

Kid-friendly state: The best place to raise a child in the United States? Maybe Iowa, says the Children's Rights Council, after comparing states on infant mortality and numbers of children in poverty and single-parent homes.

On the Cutting Edge

ESP Members Make 'Partner'

In New Jersey, when support staff gain new skills and respect, kids and teachers gain, too.

A half dozen years ago in Plainfield, New Jersey, you could have mopped the floor with middle school head custodian Jeff Foster. He could never get an appointment with the district superintendent, and his training options amounted to, well, classes on floor care.

Today, Foster can make a same-day appointment with Superintendent Larry Leverett and attend professional growth workshops on topics ranging from communications to conflict management.

It gets better. New teachers at Maxson Middle School approach Foster as a professional colleague. "They want to get to know me," this support staffer says. "It makes me feel good that they feel we're so important."

Education support employees are full partners in the 900-member Plainfield Education Association—holding key union offices and committee slots—and are "more aware and involved than ever in the circle of education," emphasizes special ed teacher and PEA President Maxine DiMaggio.

Boosting ESP equity has been a strong goal of both the Association and school district since 1995. As part of the "Partnership for Reform" program, Plainfield staff are working together to increase student achievement, staff development, communications, accountability, and site-based and shared decision-making.

Among Plainfield's shared decision-making panels are an ESP Council that meets six times a year and represents all ESP job categories, plus a Safety/Advisory Committee for custodial and maintenance staff.

Together, these ESP panels—both co-chaired by Association leaders and administrators—have generated some impressive gains, including:

■ **Ongoing training for support staff.** During teacher in-service days and winter and summer recess, Plainfield ESP get top-notch instruction—on everything from Microsoft computer programs to safe maintenance procedures—from both college instructors and trainers from the New Jersey Education Association.

And the school board has sent four support staffers to Rutgers University to become certified "Supervisors of Buildings and Grounds."

■ **Job descriptions for office staff, custodians, and teaching assistants,** with more to come for drivers and maintenance and security personnel. "Until recently, office staff were using job descriptions that dated to the 1960s—with references to manual typewriters," points out Lee Flanagan, head custodian at Plainfield High School.

"Now," he says, "everybody knows what they're responsible for—with no alibis, no excuses, and no exceptions."

■ **Quality and respect.** "ESP are now doing an even better job for the kids," adds Flanagan, "because they are treated as equals, and *everyone* in our schools is respected and valued."

"A lot of support staffers work on committees with administrators," notes Jeff Foster. "That's just one way they've learned to respect us."

Thanks to all that esteem-building and training, ESP are becoming more active as leaders in Plainfield, a town many call home. They're using their sharpened skills to help with boxing, youth action movement, recreation, and beautification programs.

"Most of my ESP co-workers," says Foster, "are young, with kids in this district. They want to create a better environment for them to learn.

"Many of us play important roles as Black role models," he adds. "Because the district has recognized the importance of support staff, kids now see everyone at school working together, modeling collaborative behavior."

That might help explain something. Last year, students in this low-income, underfunded urban district boosted their scores on New Jersey's High School Proficiency Test.

PEA President DiMaggio credits increased staff development for the test score gains. But ask an ESP in Plainfield, and you may hear something about respect, too.

Rachelle Omerson

These support employees are full partners in Plainfield's schools. From left to right: Lee Flanagan, Jeffrey Foster, Anthony Tweedy, and Leyland Smith.

For More Information

Call Plainfield Education Association President Maxine DiMaggio at 908/561-0664 or Lee Flanagan, chair of the Union County Education Association support staff council, at 908/753-3254.

Putting Trust on Paper

Maxine DiMaggio, president of the Plainfield Education Association, doesn't use the word "collaborative" when describing her local's relationship with the district. "I like to say that we're working together in a cooperative spirit," she stresses.

"At first, some of our members felt that this form of New Unionism meant moving away from what the Association stands for," DiMaggio acknowledges. "But I believe that protecting members' rights is uppermost in my job description."

In fact, the Plainfield partnership agreement—which grew out of interest-based bargaining—doesn't require either party to abandon its "unique roles and responsibilities." The agreement simply requires them to work together.

"The things that make such agreements work are good relationships and a high level of trust," says UniServ rep Rosemary Graziano.

But even where such trust exists, cautions Plainfield negotiating committee member Jeff Foster, "you still need something in writing. You never have every administrator playing by the rules, and new people continually come on board."

Putting Jobs on Paper

By updating their school support staff job descriptions, the folks in Plainfield, New Jersey, are clearly ahead of the curve. "In too many districts across the country," says NEA's Roxanne Dove, "support staff job descriptions tend to be old—if they exist at all.

"Without a formalized statement of your job's duties, qualifications, and responsibilities, based on an objective analysis," Dove asks, "how can you have fair evaluations, discuss professional development needs, or have a dialogue with a supervisor about your career?"

Good question. For answers, read NEA's *Job Descriptions Do's & Don'ts* at www.nea.org/esp/jobdodon.htm. For print copies, contact NEA's ESP Program Office at 202/822-7131. Send E-mail to KLindsay@nea.org.

Budget surpluses: State governments ended the 1998 fiscal year with an estimated $40 billion in extra cash. How significant is this total surplus? To place the figure in context: States spent $158.5 billion on K-12 education last year.

Less time for studying: High school seniors in the United States are seven times more likely to be employed, for at least five hours a week, than are students in their last year of secondary school in France, Italy, Switzerland, and Austria.

No more home alone: Eighty percent of America's registered voters would gladly pay $10 a year more in taxes, says a new poll from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, if that extra charge went to fund more after-school programs for kids.

Shorter work weeks: French lawmakers have enacted legislation that requires employers with more than 20 workers to shorten the work week to 35 hours by the year 2000, with no pay cuts from the current 39-hour week standard.

In the States

Sticking Together for Kids
California's "I Can Do It" program originated in 1996-97 as a pilot project of the San Bernadino Community Coalition. SBCC unites business leaders, seniors, superintendents, and CTA/NEA chapter presidents in 33 school districts—around goals like child literacy by the third grade, school safety, improved technology, and better public relations for public schools.

A Test Designed To Fail
Stephen E. Gorrie, president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, has blasted Acting Governor Paul Cellucci over his plan to require veteran teachers to pass a test to keep their jobs.

"The fairest and most accurate way to judge the capability of veteran teachers is to evaluate their actual performance in the classroom," says Gorrie.

Examining the Exam
The New Mexico Board of Education is working with some 70 educators, including NEA-New Mexico Vice President Eduardo Holguin, to customize and review a competency exam for new teachers and teachers who are renewing their licenses.

The panel is scrutinizing the 12-hour test, which will debut in May 1999, for cultural bias, content, and relevance. Those who fail the exam will still be able to obtain a license through a peer-review process.

Listen to This Governor
Jolene Franken, president of the Iowa State Education Association, is one of 17 members of Governor Terry Branstad's newly created Council for Continuous Improvement in Education.

The panel will examine ways to recruit and retain quality teachers.

"Teacher qualifications are far and away the most important influence, outside of the home and family, on student achievement," Branstad says. "We must move forward with ways to pay good teachers more for teaching well. And we must do it in a way that strengthens schools."

Helping New Teachers Succeed

When rookies want help in classroom management, the California Teachers Association steps in.

In 11 years of mentoring newcomers to her profession, California fifth grade teacher Annie Solomon has learned to spot both the swimmer and the sinker.

She remembers one aspiring educator who was "good at assembling materials and making sure everything was organized, but unable to get a point across to students."

Solomon, who teaches at Twentynine Palms Elementary School in southern California, asked the novice, "What do you want your students to know, and how will you present it to them to reach your goals?"

Farther down the road, Solomon recommended hands-on workshops to the struggling teacher and, eventually, a shift in careers.

When classroom teaching isn't the best option, "I try to zero in on people's strengths and weaknesses," Solomon says, "and help them make career choices they're comfortable with. I want them to leave not feeling bitter, but enriched."

This blend of savvy and sensitivity—along with experience as a human and civil rights trainer—has earned Solomon a slot as one of 32 classroom management instructors in the California Teachers Association's popular "I Can Do It" program.

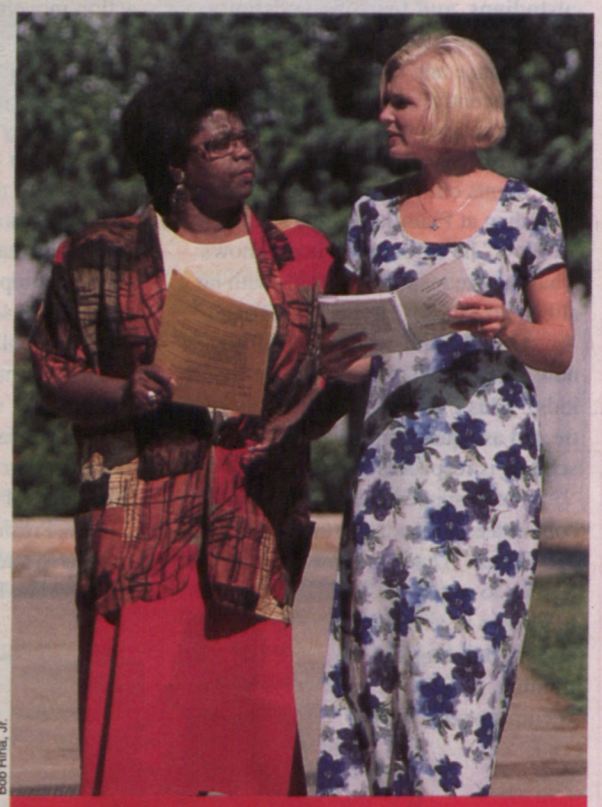
A six-hour class geared for teachers in their first five years of service, "I Can Do It" covers "all the really quick tips that teachers need on how to organize classrooms and solve disciplinary problems," says Beth Threatt, CTA's manager of instruction and professional development.

The workshop gets results—and lots of comments like this one:

"Last year," notes Threatt, "a principal told a CTA local president that a first-year probationary teacher scheduled for release was continued after participating in the 'I Can Do It' workshop. She had shown marked improvement."

The secret? "Workshop participants," says Annie Solomon, "help develop strategies they can use immediately back in the classroom."

An "I Can Do It" session—sponsored by the CTA chapter and paid for by CTA and the school district—comes with a 198-page workbook and a lesson plan based on extensive input from new and seasoned educators.



Bob Riha, Jr.

The California Teachers Association's "I Can Do It" program offers novices, like Kate Bartells (right) help from veterans like Annie Solomon.

Instructors "actually model what we want teachers to do when they go back to classroom," says UniServ rep Tony Leon, the program coordinator.

That to-do list includes:

- **Going slow in the beginning**—to establish classroom rules up front, "rather than deal with constant hassles later," says Leon.
- **Making things flow smoothly**—through such time-honored tactics as giving directions before activities, using "pay-attention" signals, and reading everything *before* students do.
- **Teaching to different learning styles**—and exercising the teacher's own communication styles.
- **Dealing with parents**—including running parent-teacher conferences and communicating with family members.
- **Dealing with difficult student behaviors**—by listing nettlesome attitudes, like "always angry," and brainstorming solutions.

The "I Can Do It" format allows for flexibility all around, says Solomon, who advises new teachers to call classroom rules "procedures and choices" as a way to gain student buy-in.

And when this veteran gets into the nitty-gritty of lesson planning, she teaches newcomers that it's all right to deviate from procedures that fail.

"The one thing I want new teachers to walk away with," Solomon stresses, "is that it's okay to change and start over—even three or four weeks later."

This may strike seasoned teachers as common sense, but "we've discovered that classroom management is just not being dealt with in the university," laments Tony Leon.

"Too many student teachers are learning this stuff by osmosis," he says, "without a set course."

Says Solomon: "University training *must* be designed to let prospective teachers know what they'll need on a day-to-day basis."

Until then, CTA's "I Can Do It" program fills in the gaps.

For More Information

Call NEA UniServ rep Tony Leon at 909/889-0107.

The Bottom Line

Vouchers: The latest research on programs that subsidize private school tuition with public tax dollars has found no solid evidence that such programs increase learning, notes the University of Wisconsin's Alex Molnar.

Americans online: Over half of all Americans in the 16-to-34 age bracket now use the Internet, report analysts from the Nielsen Media company. The number of Americans online, reports the firm, has more than tripled since 1995.

Unequal access: Nearly three-quarters—73 percent—of white high school and college students have access to a computer at home, say researchers at Vanderbilt University. Only a third of Black students have home computers.

Some regrets: Four out of 10 college-educated Americans working in high-tech fields would choose a different major if they had their college careers to do over again. Most of them, says a George Mason University study, would choose education.

In the Labor Movement

Will Part-Timers Win Parity?

Do the same job, earn one-third the pay. That's the lot of many part-time college instructors—so far.

When Jeannie Lehmann took a part-time job teaching adult basic education at Waukesha County Technical College, she hoped it would lead to something full-time, with decent pay, benefits, and security.

Seven years later, the Wisconsin college instructor is still classified as part-time and paid only for her hours in the classroom. She has no paid prep time, holiday or sick pay, benefits, job security—and no voice with the administration.

Yet Lehmann and some 700 other part-time instructors are held to the same standards as the college's 210 full-time educators, who are members of the Waukesha County Technical Educators' Association.

Nobody thinks that's fair. That's why the full-time instructors and support staff—backed by the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) and the AFL-CIO—are helping the part-time faculty fight for union recognition and a contract.

Explains Lehmann, a member of the part-timers' organizing committee: "I'm not a power person, but we *need* power—and ownership in the educational process. We need a voice in the quality of our students' education."

Without that voice, part-timers—and educational quality—suffer from:

■ **High turnover**—a logical consequence of job insecurity and low pay.

■ **A lack of basic instructional supports**—including office and storage space, adequate curricula, voice mail or E-mail, back-up from administrators, and night-time security.

■ **Isolation from students and colleagues.** To earn a living wage, part-time instructors rush among classes at scattered campuses and industry worksites—often leaving student counseling to already-overburdened full-timers. Moreover, part-timers' hectic schedules sometimes force them to miss key staff meetings.

Bud Teske

Part-time employees, like Waukesha (Wisconsin) County Technical College instructor Jeannie Lehmann (right), are an ever-growing segment of the U.S. workforce—up from 12 percent in 1957 to 18 percent in 1997, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

■ **Administration monopoly over decision-making.** In the name of enhancing "individual participation" and building a "professional, Total Quality culture," college administrators are working overtime to forestall part-timers' *collective* participation in academic decisions.

Last school year, the college hired Mickus and Associates—a $250-an-hour anti-union consulting firm—and laid off full-time auto body repair instructor Bud Teske, chief negotiator for the faculty union and a member of the part-timers' organizing committee.

This year, the consultants are gone, Bud Teske is back in his body shop, and Jeannie Lehmann feels "personally energized" for the campaign ahead.

The college sent Mickus and Associates packing after the 60,000-member Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, researched and publicized the firm's union-busting track record.

And the college rehired Teske after his firing was revealed to the press in an on-campus "workers' rights hearing" co-sponsored in June by WEAC and the AFL-CIO's Waukesha and Milwaukee county labor councils.

At that hearing, a community Workers' Rights Board—including clergy, politicians, and WEAC and AFL-CIO local leaders—heard the testimony of Teske and part-time instructors like Tom Fredricks.

"We work from the same texts, assign the same homework, and grade the same tests as those used by full-time teachers, and we are often evaluated just as they are," Fredricks told an audience of more than 200 people. "Yet we receive one-third of the pay of full-time teachers."

Extensive press coverage from that hearing put Waukesha County Technical College on the map—and college administrators in the hot seat.

"We were never involved with AFL-CIO unions before, but now that we've established contact, we want to keep it going," says a grateful Teske. "These people know how to fight in the trenches."

For More Information

For details on the WCTC organizing campaign and to find out how to send a message of support to part-time instructors, go to www.weac.org/constit/WTCS/PTUF/home.htm.

The Hearing Was Heard

The "workers' rights hearing" held on behalf of part-time instructors at Waukesha County Technical College was just one of some 70 events the AFL-CIO sponsored nationwide on a single day in June to support workers' right to organize.

"We support workers' right to organize," says John Goldstein, secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, "and we don't care what union they're affiliated with."

The council worked with WEAC, the Milwaukee County Technical Educators Association, and the Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee to assemble a high-profile worker rights panel that included a Waukesha city council member and a former mayor.

Then the organizers pushed to maximize turnout, which included carloads of WEAC members and a busload of AFT members.

"With the backing of our fellow union supporters," says WEAC organizer Leigh Barker, "we were able to tell the community for the first time what's been going on inside the college walls."

ESP Organizing Boost

A new law signed in New York State will make it harder for employers to block union organizing drives by hiring union-busting consultants and training supervisors in anti-union techniques.

The legislation, initiated by the New York State AFL-CIO and supported by NEA-New York, makes any form of anti-union communications an unfair labor practice—for both public *and* private sector employers—and subjects violators to a loss of state funds.

"An anti-union employer that receives any state money will now have to start doing some serious bean counting," says NEA-New York lobbyist Michael Lynch.

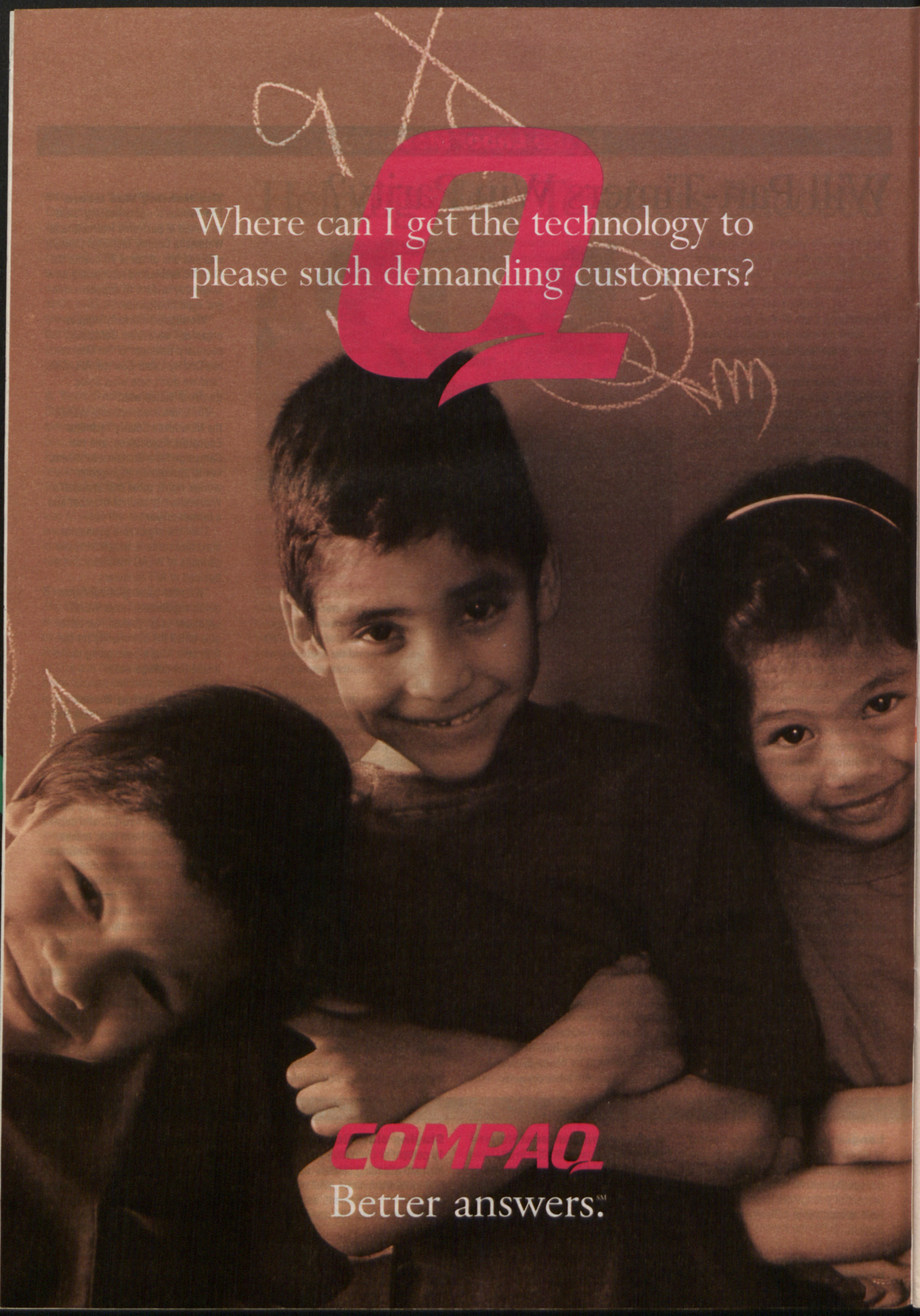
"This new law," Lynch adds, "creates a new frontier for organizing unorganized educational support personnel and sets a broader, pro-labor tone in New York State."

Language diversity: The number of kids who don't speak English at home has doubled since 1979, says the Census Bureau. Nationally, about 5 percent of youngsters under 18 now have at least some difficulty speaking English.

College applications: More students, just under 30,000 in all, applied to UCLA last year than any other college or university. About 70 percent of high school seniors last year were admitted to their first-choice for higher education.

Staying close to home: Only 10 percent of the nation's college freshmen are attending classes more than 500 miles from home. Well over half of all freshmen, 60 percent, are enrolled in a school less than 100 miles from their parents.

Public health: Inequality is bad for your health, even if you're not poor, concludes a new comparison of all but one of America's 283 metropolitan areas. For details on the health-inequality link, check : http://weber.u.washington.edu/~eqhlth/.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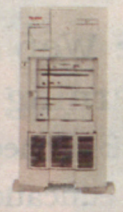
- 32X Max[2] CD-ROM, Premier Audio Sound
- Compaq S700 17" (15.7" VIA) color monitor included[4]
- 6 Slot 5 Bay Towerable Desktop
- Matrox Millennium G200-SD AGP Graphics with 8 MB/16 MB max
- Microsoft Windows 95
- Compaq Intelligent Manageability
- 3-year limited warranty[3]



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Leasing Price: $68.82/Month*

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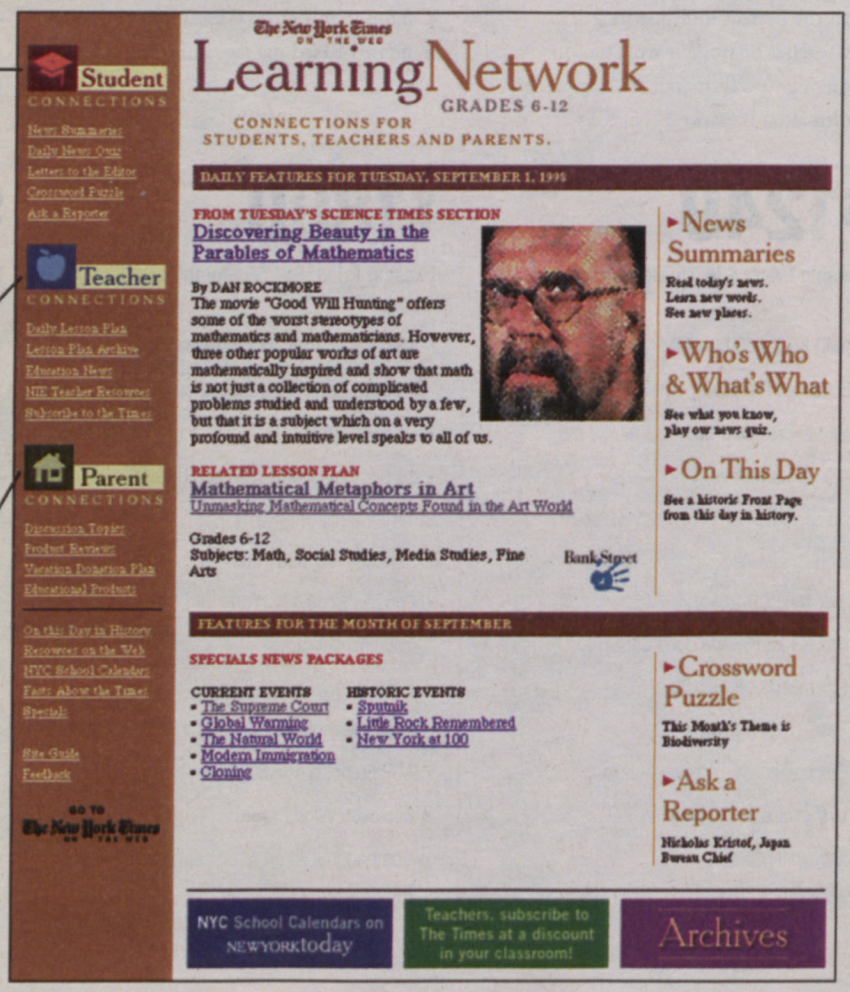
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DAILY FEATURES FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1998
FROM TUESDAY'S SCIENCE TIMES SECTION
Discovering Beauty in the Parables of Mathematics
By DAN ROCKMORE
The movie "Good Will Hunting" offers some of the worst stereotypes of mathematics and mathematicians. However, three other popular works of art are mathematically inspired and show that math is not just a collection of complicated problems studied and understood by a few, but that it is a subject which on a very profound and intuitive level speaks to all of us.
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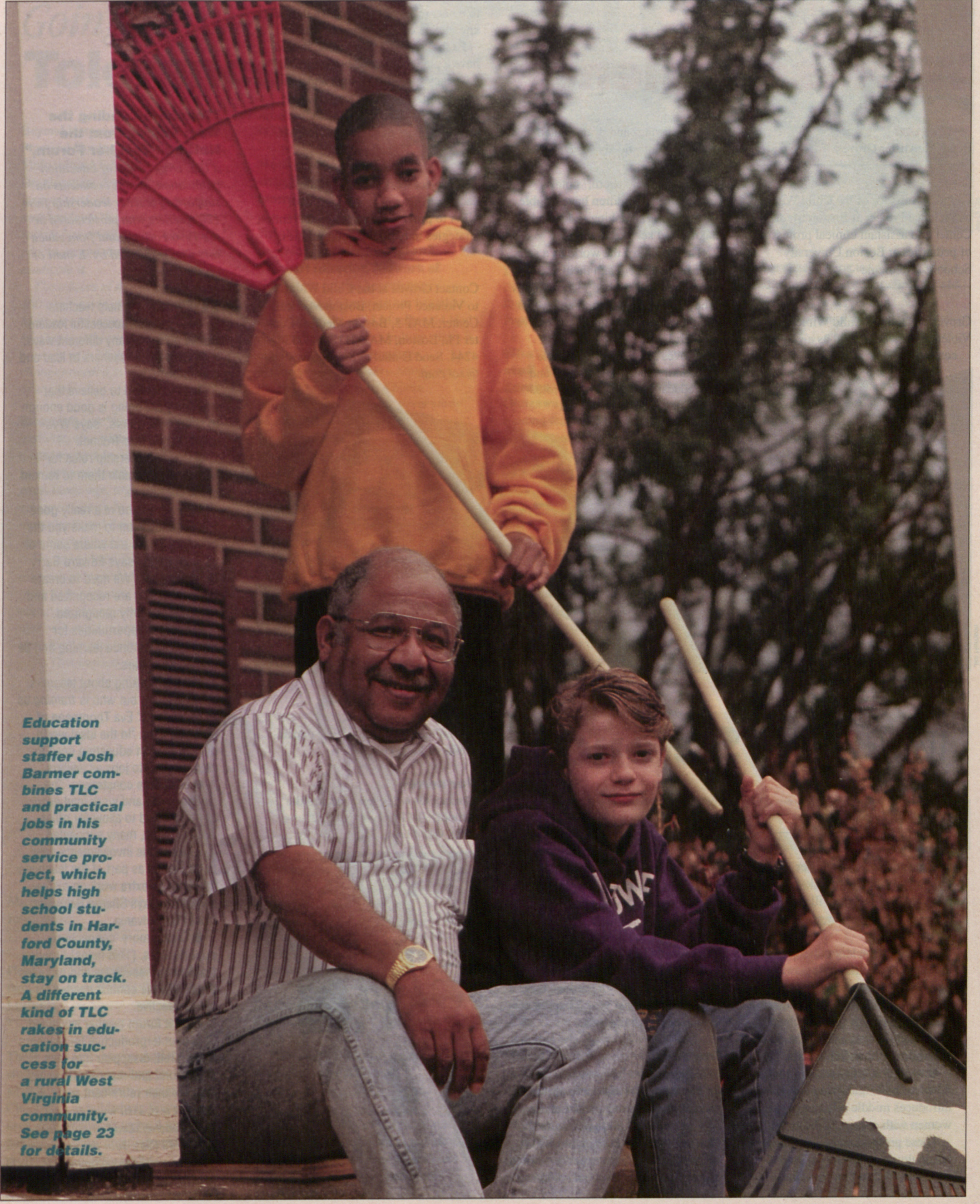


Education support staffer Josh Barmer combines TLC and practical jobs in his community service project, which helps high school students in Harford County, Maryland, stay on track. A different kind of TLC rakes in education success for a rural West Virginia community. *See page 23 for details.*

Chris Hartlove

Innovators

When Children Witness Violence

Innovator:
Betsy McAlister Groves

Job:
Founding director of the Child Witness to Violence Project at Boston Medical Center and assistant clinical professor of pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine

Bright Idea:
Groves created the Child Witness to Violence Project in 1992 as a way to counsel children who have witnessed gang- and drug-related violence, domestic abuse, even the horrors of war.

"In and out of school," notes Groves, "these children have trouble concentrating, finishing tasks, and making and keeping friends.

"Their sense of the world as a safe place has changed, and their sense of themselves is disturbed," says Groves. "They are pessimistic and believe, at some level, they are not going to live out their lives."

Groves says identifying these children early is critical—and educators play a crucial role. They need to be trained to detect problems and have a thorough knowledge of counseling resources.

Each district, Groves feels, should have a plan that includes therapy and advocacy for child victims and a means to maximize the child's safety. And each school should have rules that establish a climate of safety and respect.

Impact:
The project works with 200 families each year. Groves is working with NEA to provide training in intervention strategies in two pilot communities.

For More:
Contact Groves at the Child Witness to Violence Project, Boston Medical Center, MAT 5, Boston Medical Center Pl., Boston, MA 02118, 617/534-4244. Send E-mail to bmcagroves@aol.com.

Jim Harrison

WISE about Science

Innovators:
Susan Grubbs and Sue McFerren

Job:
Science and English teacher, respectively, at Grover Cleveland Middle School, Zanesville, Ohio

Bright Idea:
Disturbed by the large number of middle school girls shying away from careers in math, science, and technology, Grubbs and McFerren created a program at their school to expose adolescent girls to the career possibilities those fields hold.

Now it its fourth year, Women in Science and Engineering—WISE—introduces middle school girls to women with careers in these fields.

These professionals—a geologist, horticulturist, pharmacist, physician, coroner, and more—take questions in class, let the students visit them at work, or guide them on an archeological dig, a safari for endangered species, and other field trips.

"When first asked to draw their concept of a scientist," says Grubbs, "they usually draw a bald man with glasses in a lab coat. As they complete the program, the picture they draw is more like themselves."

WISE currently accommodates only 30 seventh and eighth graders, but it's so popular that last year 52 applicants clamored for 15 openings.

Impact:
WISE graduates have demonstrated a 74 percent improvement in attitude toward math, science, and technology.

A recent $818,000 grant from the National Science Foundation will allow the program to expand, develop a program for high school students, and collaborate with science departments of local colleges.

For more:
Contact Grover Cleveland Middle School, 714 Pershing Rd., Zanesville, OH 43701, 740/453-0636.

Jeff Cope

Education Leaders

"Teachers Leading the Way: Voices from the National Teacher Forum," *a U.S. Department of Education publication, gleans comments on supporting teacher leadership from 120 teachers who participated in the 1996 Forum—and from educators who responded by E-mail or on the Web.*

"Support to help teachers become successful leaders can be given in many different ways.

■ Encourage teachers to lead and stay informed.

'Teachers need to believe that what they are doing is good enough to share with others,' says Wyoming teacher Jan Truchot.

■ Create leadership roles for teachers that enable them to remain in the classroom.

'Typically, if you're a really good teacher, they want to make you the principal. That's not where some of us want to go,' says Edward Barry from Vermont. 'We need to create other roles that are recognized and maybe monetarily recognized.'

■ Provide opportunities for teachers to continue learning and be trained as leaders.

'We keep talking about teachers being leaders, but who is *training* us to be leaders?' Eva Thompson of Alabama asks. 'In the ideal world, our colleges of education need to help us get into jobs as leaders.'

■ Ease time constraints. The teacher's day and work load need to be adjusted to allow for other involvements, many suggested.

'The outside involvements need to be viewed as part of the teacher's job—not as extra work on his/her own time,' says Sharon Schwartz from Pennsylvania.

■ Create more 'connection' opportunities. [This helps] broaden teachers' perspectives and provides them with the context needed for being effective.

As one forum teacher explained, 'It is counterproductive for teachers to be hired, disappear into their classroom, and reappear 27 years later for their retirement party.'"

For full text, visit www.ed.gov/pubs/TeachersLead or call 800/443-3742 ($3). Join the conversation at www.ed.gov/comments/TeachLeader.

Going Beyond **Tolerance**

Joe Di Dio

Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development *demonstrates through lessons, articles, cartoons, poems, and handouts the devastating impact racism has on all people and how educators and students can begin to eradicate it.*

The editors of this provocative 460-page guide are (left to right) Margaret Okazawa-Rey, Deborah Menkart, and Enid Lee. They spoke recently with NEA Today *about the changes needed in multicultural education.*

What about "heroes and holidays"—should they be celebrated in school?

Lee (international consultant on race, language, and culture as they relate to equity in education and organizational development): Yes, but differently.

We need to rethink, reframe, and refine our curriculum. We need to teach kids to realize that heroes come out of a community with struggles and social injustices and that they don't make history on their own. This impacts what kids think of themselves.

How does that differ from what we now think of as multicultural education?

Menkart (director, Network of Educators on the Americas): Multicultural education has been like the lyrics of the "Old MacDonald Had A Farm" song—here a culture, there a culture, everywhere a culture.

One week, it's Native Americans, the next Latinos, then African Americans. But students never study white identity or examine who holds the power in society. Everyone else is the exotic subject of study.

What obstacles do you face in getting your philosophy into mainstream schools?

Okazawa-Rey (professor, School of Social Work, San Francisco State University): Inertia is the biggest one. Second is that teachers are very overworked. Third, we're dealing with a nation that is not committed to quality education for all children.

But when teachers and schools are given half the chance, they rise to the occasion. The problem comes when institutions discourage people from innovating.

What's wrong with today's staff development when it comes to multiculturalism?

Okazawa-Rey: Today's professional training teaches educators to look at one piece of the problem—for example, the curriculum and learning styles—neglecting other factors that have an impact on who our students are. We need to look at education with multiple lenses, and make it transformative.

Teachers rarely have a chance to examine their experiences from a critical perspective. Many exercises and activities used today in multicultural staff development workshops focus on teachers, mostly white, learning about cultures different from theirs.

Teachers are presented histories and generalized characteristics of racial and cultural groups that reinforce old stereotypes or serve to maintain a distance as "the other."

Menkart: It's impossible to transform others unless we understand ourselves. So the book includes a personal cultural history exercise to allow staff the opportunity to think about their own racial and cultural identities and the experiences that shaped those identities.

Okazawa-Rey: This book offers a vision of a world that is better, that is just, that is safe and secure for all people.

To order Beyond Heroes and Holidays, *send $27 plus $7 s&h to Network of Educators on the Americas, P.O. Box 73038, Washington, DC 20056, 202/238-2379, Fax 202/238-2378. Send E-mail to necadc@aol.com.*

Time for **Good Books**

Norman Y. Lono

Innovators:
Michael (left) and Matthew Josefowicz

Job:
Head of production planning and publisher, respectively, Chapbooks for Learning

Bright Idea:
These guys love books. And they want students to develop a love for the written word. So they've created Chapbooks, a publishing house that uses state-of-the-art technology to publish students' creative writing in professional quality books.

"We've pulled together the best available technology and designed a fast, easy system that works for teachers," says Matthew.

Teachers send their students' writing to Chapbooks by E-mail or on disk, and select a design format from their Web site. Chapbooks posts each draft of the book online as it develops—no more sending proofs in the mail—and teachers and their classes can work together to make revisions.

The result? Beautiful paperback books, for around $5 a copy.

Impact:
Though theirs is a new venture, the Josefowiczes have found at test sites that students regard their Chapbooks as much more than "just another assignment to turn in."

For More:
Contact Chapbooks for Learning, 161 Avenue of the Americas, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10013, 212/463-8504. Visit the Web at www.chapbooks.com.

Top 10 List for **Teacher Quality**

How can the U.S. meet the growing demand for teachers—and get high-quality teachers to boot? Linda Darling-Hammond, professor of education at Stanford University, offered this list at the AFT/NEA Conference on Teacher Quality, September 26. Visit the Web at www.teacherquality.org for full text of her remarks.

10. Raise teacher standards while equalizing teacher salaries.

9. Establish licensing reciprocity across states.

8. Grant a license to out-of-state entrants who have achieved National Board Certification.

7. Create national recruitment initiatives, streamline hiring procedures, and develop on-line information technologies.

6. Create service scholarship programs to prepare high-ability candidates in shortage fields.

5. Expand teacher education programs in high-need fields.

4. Provide incentives for the establishment of more extended (for example, five-year and fifth-year) teacher education programs.

3. Provide incentives for community college/college pathways that prepare paraprofessionals for certification.

2. Create high-quality induction programs for beginning teachers.

1. "Just say no" to hiring unqualified teachers.

Students &

Good Stuff

Getting Grants
In *How To Get Grants and Free Stuff*, NEA members who are master grant writers reveal the secrets behind their success, plus tips on how to get all staff, parents, and the community involved in acquiring material for school. Added in is a bonus section on more than 50 grant resources and freebies: 95 pp., $9.95 for NEA members. To order from the NEA Professional Library, call 800/229-4200 and refer to stock #2914-3-00-FG.

Rethinking Columbus
Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years offers more than 90 essays, poems, short stories, interviews, historical vignettes, and lesson plans re-evaluating the legacy of Columbus. This expanded new edition includes a classroom-tested role play called "The Trial of Columbus," "Thanksgiving Day" materials, and resource listings. Packed with useful teaching ideas for K-college. 192 pp., $8 (two for $12), plus $3.50 s&h. Bulk rates available. Call 800/669-4192 to order or for a catalog of Rethinking Schools materials.

Standardized Tests
Feel increasingly powerless in the high-stakes realm of standardized reading tests? *A Teacher's Guide to Standardized Reading Tests: Knowledge Is Power* provides an overview of testing, then discusses how to use this information to be a more effective participant in the testing debate. Also discussed are how good teaching and good test scores can overlap, and how educators can efficiently help students navigate tests. 198 pp., $17.50 plus $4 s&h from Heinemann. To order, call 800/225-5800 or visit the Web at www.heinemann.com.

Girls and Math
Feisty Females: Inspiring Girls To Think Mathematically provides a classroom-based approach to math instruction that incorporates literature with strong female role models. The authors, which include NEA members, describe how this can lead elementary students in explorations of numbers and computation, geometry and measurement, probability and statistics, and algebraic ideas. 149 pp., $22 plus $4 s&h from Heinemann. To order, call 800/225-5800 or visit the Web at www.heinemann.com.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"Your student is excited because her brother was on 'America's Most Wanted.'"

Linda Hampton, elementary teacher, Seminole, Oklahoma

Dilemma

Danger in the Workplace

What do you do when you feel threatened by a student?

Ted Pitts

I keep my cool and talk softly to the student to try to diffuse the situation. At the same time, I try to move the student to the door to attract the attention of others in the next room.

This technique really helped me a few years ago when I was doing the Saturday morning/afternoon detention sessions at school.

A student flew into a rage because I wanted him to work and not sleep (which is not allowed). He threatened me with bodily harm in front of 20 other students in the classroom.

I talked him toward the door on the pretense of discussing the matter outside the room. As he exited first, I shut and locked the door behind him. I then told him he needed to take a walk to cool down.

He raged outside as I called for a guard who was on duty. I was shaking, but I tried not to show it to him, or to the scared kids in the class. He finally left the building after the guard called the police.

Susan Bastedo
High school math teacher
Mt. Holly, New Jersey

I have been threatened by a student only once. This office teacher's assistant was a complete stranger to me and entered my room to deliver a pass to a student.

Against school policy, this TA approached my student directly, disrupting the class.

When I told the TA that all passes should come to me, he got literally right in my face—three inches between our noses—and proceeded to try to glare me down with the most evil look on his face.

Stunned, I just returned his look blandly. He gave up and turned away.

I realized afterward that this was the best possible response, as anything else would have rewarded this unseemly behavior.

Susan Smith
High school chemistry teacher
Mill Valley, California

Body language is very important. The educator should take an assertive stance. It should not reflect power or passivity. It should affirm to the student that you are totally composed and confident that this situation can be resolved peacefully.

This voice and body position should beckon the student to "come along," reassuring the student that everything will work out.

Kris Ryskamp
Elementary music teacher
Byron Center, Michigan

I document everything the student says and does. I check with colleagues and other professionals for ideas that I haven't thought of. And I write up the student to our Student Assistance For Everyone (SAFE) team so that the child can be talked to by a trained faculty member.

I call home to find out if there are special circumstances that make the child hypervigilant. And I meet with the student's guidance counselor and the school psychologist.

I make sure that I don't treat the student differently from the other students—even if I feel afraid of the student, I'm diligent about enforcing the classroom rules.

Carol Malenfant
High school biology/general science teacher
Waterbury, Connecticut

Got an Answer?

How do you support students struggling with their sexual orientation?
Send your answer to *NEA Today* through regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org**. Please include your job title and grade level.

Respondents published here will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug!

Strategies

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Your students call you at home to ask how they can do better on their projects."

Dan Rulli, high school social science teacher, Laramie, Wyoming

Delight

Writers Bloc Forms in Texas

K-12 students author their own success story by producing a literary anthology.

Students often receive recognition for science, math, and athletic accomplishments. But, 13 years ago, Texas teacher Holly Braden noticed that "there was nothing to encourage good writing."

So Braden developed the Literary Anthology Project to encourage her elementary students to pick up a pencil and start writing. The program, sponsored in part by the Socorro Education Association, has since spread districtwide.

Now each of the 22,000 K-12 students in El Paso's Socorro Independent School District gets what all good writers want: a shot every year at getting published.

In first through eighth grade, students can contribute works that fall into one of five categories, including short story and human biography. High school students can compete in eight categories, including plays and literary criticism.

Entries are accepted in English or Spanish.

Each school site, working to guidelines sent out by Braden, incorporates the program into its curriculum and decides which entries to send on to the anthology.

Braden receives hundreds of submissions, and around 200 of those from all grade levels make it into print.

Can first graders produce poems and personal essays good enough for a literary anthology?

"Yes," says Braden, now a computer lab teacher at Myrtle Cooper Elementary. "We made sure the students would be judged by criteria strict enough to meet anyone's definition of 'literary.'"

Entries are judged on clarity, organization, and interest. A jury—made up of English teachers from other districts, university professors, graduate students, and members of the media—chooses first, second, and third place winners for each literary category.

Each spring, the winners are feted at an author's reception. Their parents, teachers, principals, and school board members join them for a event that includes speakers and a highly anticipated award ceremony.

An audience of 300 cheers the winners as they receive certificates and awards. Each winner also receives a copy of that year's anthology—a thick, bound volume that validates their foray into the world of writing.

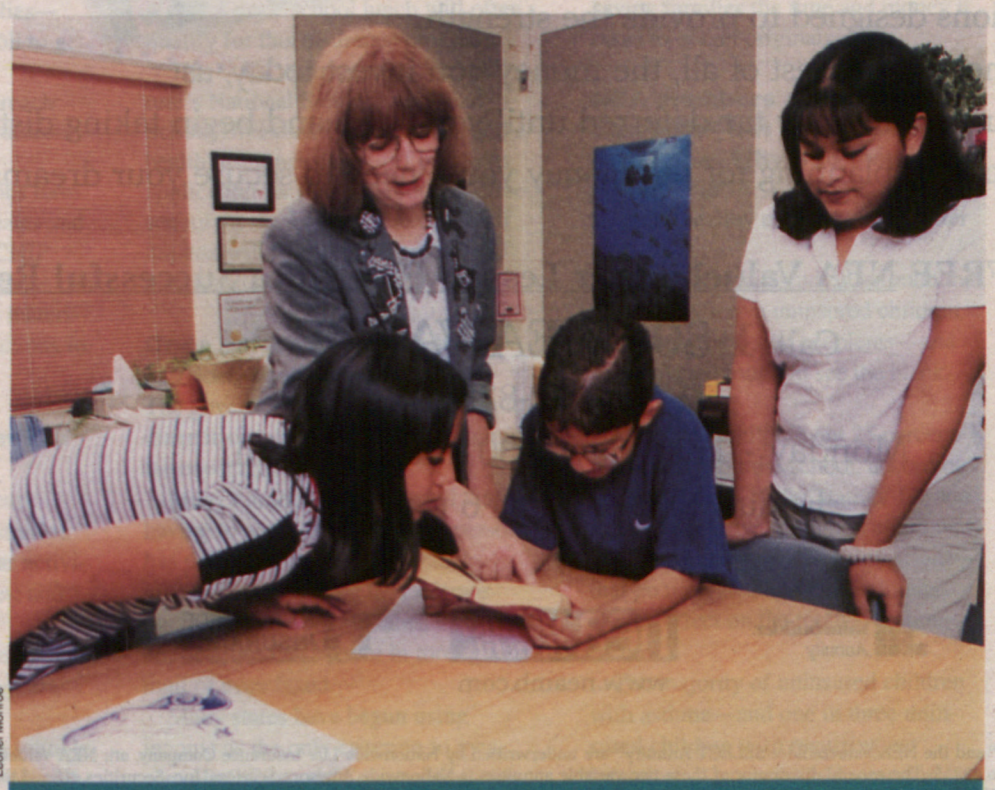
Their work can be seen by all in the community, since each public library receives a copy of the anthology. Each winning student's teacher gets a copy, too, as do the administrators and judges.

Since the anthology project is embedded in the curriculum, it's difficult to pinpoint exactly what effect it's had on reading and writing skills. But Joe Bob Shook, director of secondary education, notes that TAAS results—a Texas study measuring writing—show impressive gains in performance.

Scores aside, the anthology project has inspired a broad range of students to write. Last year, one of the first-place writers came from an alternative high school for students with severe discipline problems.

For More Information

Contact Holly Braden at Myrtle Cooper Elementary, 915/857-4310, or send E-mail to hbraden@Socorro.k12.tx.us.



Leonel Monroe

Good writing has its rewards—and every student in El Paso now knows it, thanks for NEA member Holly Braden's literary anthology.

Idea Exchange

Reading . . .

My high school students have designed and displayed posters "advertising" their favorite books and why other people should read them. I've posted faculty comments on books that have changed their lives and lists of celebrities' favorite books—all to send my students the message that successful people are readers.

Sandi Flowers
Springdale, Pennsylvania

Writing . . .

In first grade, many little ones have a problem gripping a pencil correctly, and that affects the proper formation of letters. If children are having trouble, have them hold a wadded-up paper towel or napkin in the fist of their writing hand while gripping the pencil. The thumb and forefinger are all that are left not holding the paper, and that forces a proper grip.

Connie Clary
Logandale, Nevada

And Rainy Days

On yet another rainy El Nino day, all my first and second graders were grumpy. So I decided that we'd have a "beach party."

I laid beach towels (earthquake supplies from my car) and a huge golf umbrella on the floor. We placed seashells from our science unit on yellow butcher paper sand. Blue butcher paper became the ocean, and the kids colored paper fish. We attached magnets to the fish and made fishing poles with paper clips, string, and yardsticks.

We invited the principal, and she came in wearing her sunglasses.

Students still did their work, but everyone was more relaxed.

I'm thinking about "taking" them to Alaska and making an igloo next.

Jacki Sackheim
Los Angeles, California

Share Your Ideas

You can pass along your tips to *NEA Today*'s more than 2.2 million readers in one of four ways:

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- By phone: 202/822-7201
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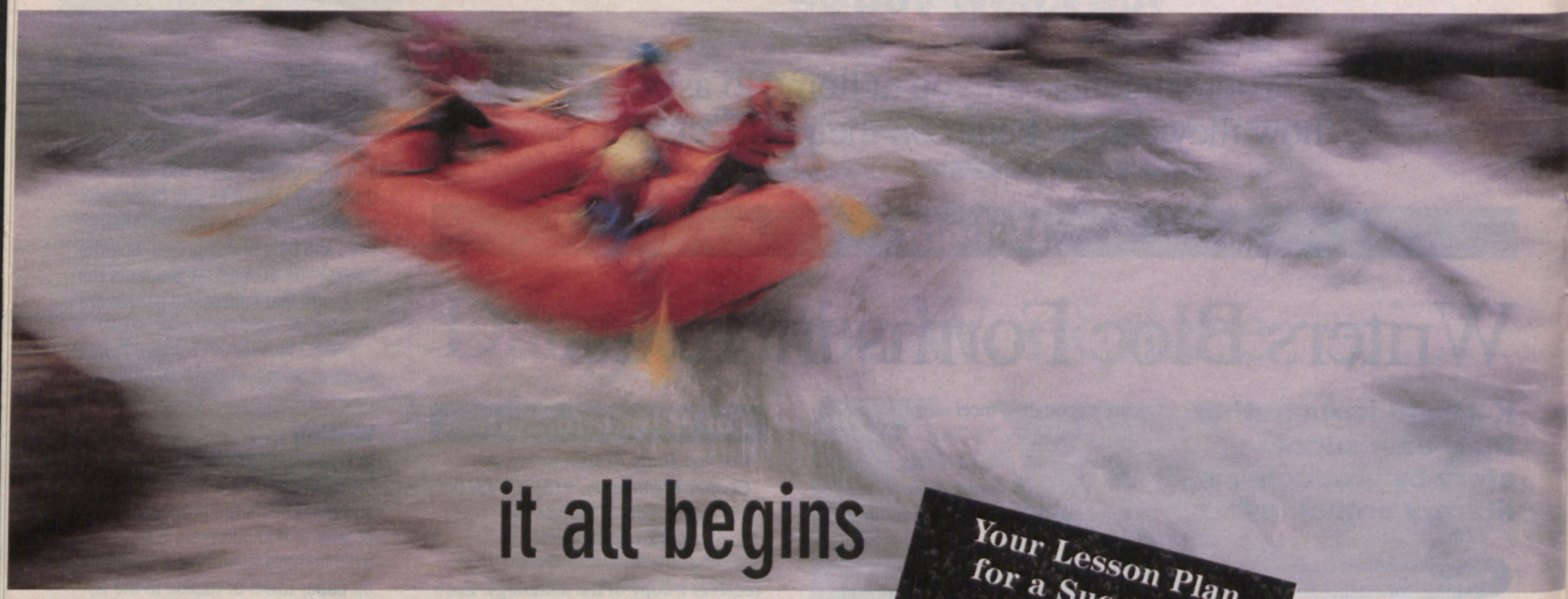

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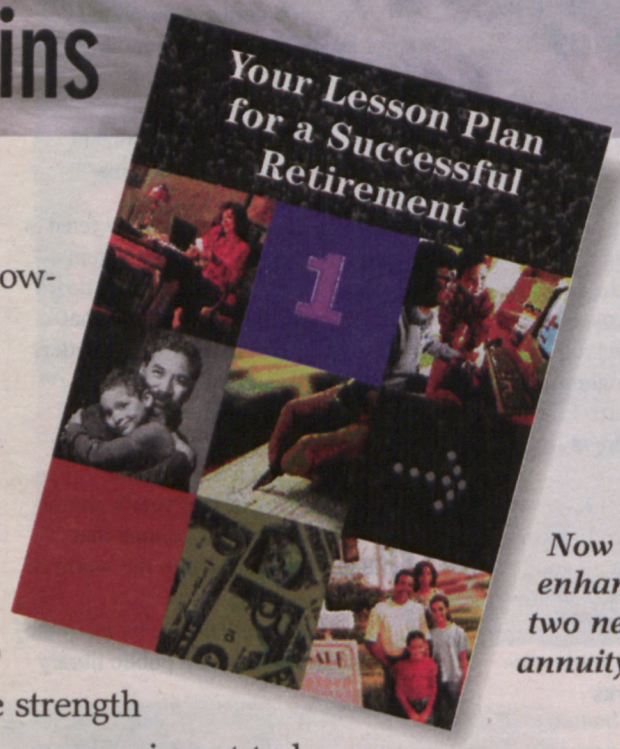

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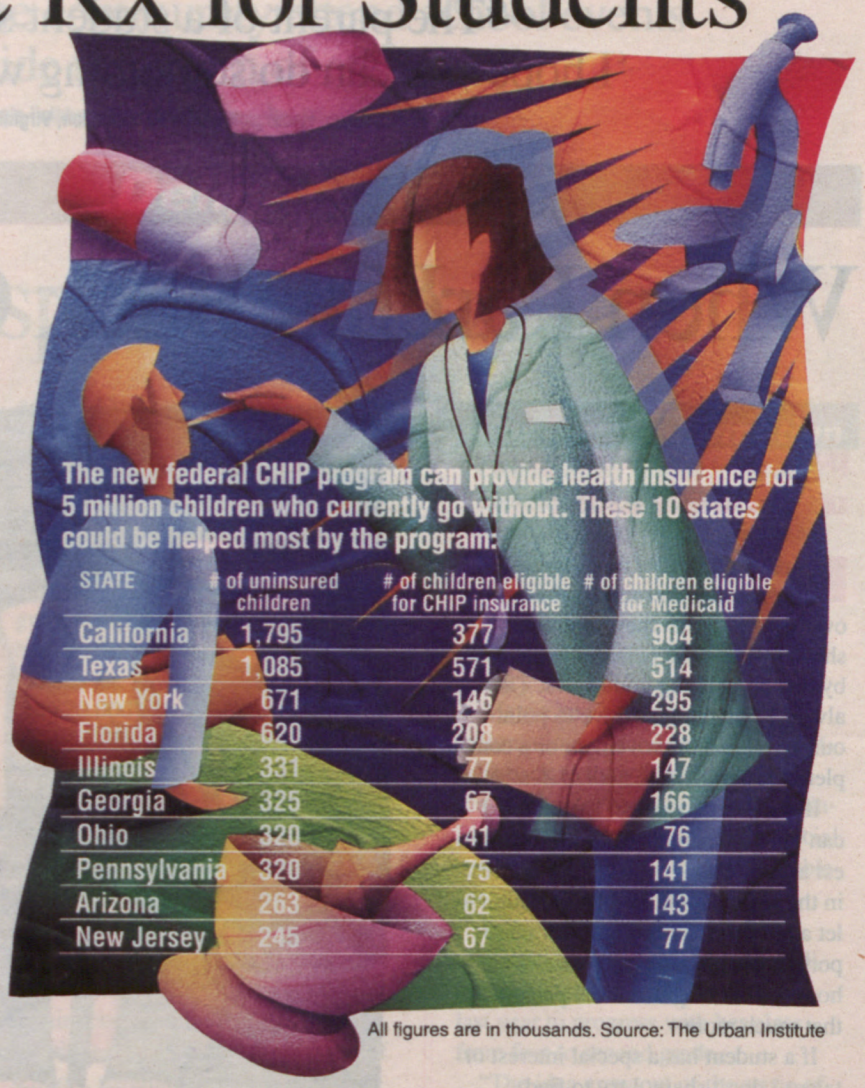
Inside Scoop

Insurance Rx for Students

A new federal program devotes billions to cover children who lack health insurance—now that's welcome news. It's called the Child Health Insurance Program—CHIP—and it has the potential to cover 5 million children.



The new federal CHIP program can provide health insurance for 5 million children who currently go without. These 10 states could be helped most by the program:

STATE	# of uninsured children	# of children eligible for CHIP insurance	# of children eligible for Medicaid
California	1,795	377	904
Texas	1,085	571	514
New York	671	146	295
Florida	620	208	228
Illinois	331	77	147
Georgia	325	67	166
Ohio	320	141	76
Pennsylvania	320	75	141
Arizona	263	62	143
New Jersey	245	67	77

All figures are in thousands. Source: The Urban Institute

What's the difference between the CHIP program and Medicaid?

Eleven million children in the U.S. now go without health insurance—2.5 million in rural areas alone. Of the 11 million, roughly 4.7 million are eligible for Medicaid but not enrolled.

CHIP covers those millions of children from families whose income is above Medicaid levels but below 200 percent of the federal poverty level—$32,900 for a family of four in 1998.

What type of health care does this coverage provide?

It will vary by state. But generally, children up to age 18 will receive hospital care, doctor and dentist visits, regular check-ups, shots, vision and hearing care, and mental health services.

So what's to worry—these students are covered.

Not quite. Though $24 billion over the next five years has been allocated to provide coverage for these children—and, in some cases, their families—their families still have to enroll to get coverage.

That requires a massive outreach effort. And that's where all educators come into play.

Several national organizations have developed resources to help states and communities get involved in CHIP enrollment activities. These groups can provide information, outreach materials, and help in making connections to state programs.

How do we connect families with this insurance?

First, let them know the program exists. Circulate flyers at registration and sign-ups for extracurricular activities, PTA meetings, at practices, and with school lunches.

Make health insurance outreach and enrollment activities part of registration and special events.

Create partnerships between schools and hospitals, clinics, and other health service organizations.

Link the school lunch program with health insurance outreach efforts, since students who are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch will often qualify for this insurance program.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs will add a health insurance check-off box to its application for free and reduced-price school meals. Parents who check off the box will receive information on both Medicaid and CHIP.

Once parents get this information, then what?

The government seems to be trying to make it simpler for families to sign up for coverage.

Many families have reported that having to apply for benefits in person has proved to be a major obstacle, given work hours and lack of transportation. So in many states, CHIP applications can be sent in through the mail or even faxed.

Many states have begun using income as the only criterion to measure eligibility—and that reduces the paperwork hoops that parents have to jump through.

Many states also now accept copies of documents like birth certificates, saving families the time and money it takes to obtain originals.

NEA members care about students—but are swamped even now. Why add insurance to the mix?

Because healthy children make better learners.

A Pennsylvania study has found that nearly one in five uninsured children had untreated vision problems—and that makes it tough to see the blackboard.

Uninsured children are 25 percent more likely to miss school, according to a study done by the state of Florida.

Just look at two common childhood diseases—asthma and ear infections—that go untreated and have a monumental effect on the total education picture.

The majority of uninsured children with asthma—and one in three uninsured children with recurring ear infections—never see a doctor during the year.

Many of the asthma sufferers end up missing school because they're hospitalized. And many children suffer permanent hearing loss from untreated ear infections.

How is NEA involved?

The NEA Health Information Network is working at the grassroots level to get children of working families enrolled in the CHIP program.

NEA HIN, in partnership with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, has distributed information flyers about CHIP to NEA local leaders and newsletter editors across the nation.

And in Philadelphia recently, a major publicity campaign resulted in the local CHIP "Helpline" being flooded with calls.

The NEA Health Information Network provided an emergency grant that paid for hotline staff who helped hundreds of families complete the application over the phone.

Several NEA local affiliates have gotten involved as well. In California, the San Diego Education Association is helping with enrollment activities in five pilot schools.

Any hitches?

CHIP may have been enacted by Congress in August 1997, but it's just getting implemented now.

Each state has to design its own CHIP-funded program, which then has to be approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. At press time, 41 states and Puerto Rico had already gotten their programs in place.

For More Information

- Two government organizations with unwieldy titles administer the CHIP program together: the Health Care Financing Administration and the Health Resources and Services Administration. For official information and applications, visit their sites on the Web at www.hcfa.gov/init/children.htm or www.hrsa.dhhs.gov/childheath, or contact your local or state health department.

- The Children's Defense Fund has initiated a nationwide campaign that provides detailed information on signing up for CHIP. Call 800/CDF-1200, then select 2. Or visit the Web at www.childrensdefense.org

- The NEA Health Information Network can provide information on getting involved in outreach activities. Send E-mail to kidhealth@aol.com.

Good Stuff

Community Control
Join in the discussion of "Public School Standards: Discussing the Case for Community Control"—that's the title and topic of an online symposium taking place on January 13, 1999, 1-4 p.m. ET. Noted educator and author Deborah Meier, a leading proponent of small urban schools and community-based standards, will be the keynote speaker. To learn more about how to participate or just "listen in" to this conference, sponsored by the Annenberg Rural Challenge, send an E-mail to ruraledu.together.net.

Violence Prevention
Safe Schools, Safe Students: A Guide to Violence Prevention Strategies grades 84 nationally available school violence prevention programs. Evaluated by 15 of the nation's top violence prevention experts, only 10 programs received an *A*—and 49 got a *C* or *D*. The book also discusses nine components of a good prevention program. What doesn't work? Scare tactics and programs that focus exclusively on self-esteem. $12.95 plus $3 s&h from Drug Strategies, 2445 M St., N.W., Suite 480, Washington, DC 20037.

A Guide to Safe Schools
Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools tells educators, parents, and community leaders how to prevent violence in schools, when to intervene and get help for troubled students, and how to respond to a violent situation. For a free copy of this guide, developed by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice and the National Association of School Psychologists, call 877/4ED-PUBS or visit the Web at www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.html.

Family Reading Program
Book Time for the Family: A Teacher's Kit for Implementing a Family Reading Program offers classroom-tested ways to encourage regular family reading and get parents involved in the learning process. Information on how to set up a class library and how to keep records, plus sample forms and bibliographies, are included. 80 pp., $15.95 from Resource Publications, 160 E. Virginia St., Suite 290, San Jose, CA 95112-5876, 408/286-8505, Fax 408/287-8748.

You know you have a problem when . . .
"The parent of a student says, 'I hope *you* can do something with him!'"
Gwen Wilson, kindergarten teacher, Abingdon, Virginia

Dilemma

When Parents Back Out

How do you deal with parents who've given up on their kids?

Ted Pitts

Parents often give up because they've had so much bad news over the years that they've grown shells to avoid the pain. So I chip away by communicating good news. There's always something positive to point out, if only an improvement or a completed assignment.

If that strategy doesn't work—if I can't get the parents to show any interest at all—I make sure I show interest in the student. It takes just one adult to let a kid know he or she is not unimportant. A student who is faceless at home needs helpful school personnel that much more.

If a student has a special interest or talent I don't share, I try to find another adult, be it teacher or janitor, who can connect with the student.

Barbara Williams
High school teacher
Sierra Vista, Arizona

Most students arrive at our inner-city continuation high school with a sense of failure. Yet I've rarely found the parent—or auntie or grandparent—who does not respond well to praise. And I have met only one parent who was unmovable in his antagonistic position toward his child.

One year, I sent home "positive postcards" when I liked something a student did. I try to phone all the parents soon after the start of school with positive comments about the child. Invariably, this also allows me to learn about other issues facing this student.

As a parent of a learning disabled child, I too had my years of despair. Yet one positive word, a single piece of praise, lasted for years, and buoyed the faith and confidence of my daughter and myself.

Sewellyn Kaplan
High school resource specialist
San Pablo, California

In many cases, parents give up on their child because they feel overwhelmed and don't know what to do. I try to plan with parents, looking at options that would work for them. I try to be realistic and start small.

My team teacher and I strive to have a specific focus so that the parent and the child can have a common understanding. Sometimes, we need to work on rebuilding a positive relationship between the parent and the child before dealing with the actual school work.

Barbara Spry
Sixth grade teacher
Aurora, Colorado

My team of three and I listen patiently to frustration, and sometimes blame, we hear from parents who feel defeated. We acknowledge the frustration. When it's our turn to speak, we reassure the parents that, with their cooperation, we can begin to help with Plan A. This lets them know that we have other plans if the first doesn't succeed.

The actual plans vary. We keep in weekly contact with the parents, by phone and in person. Assignment books signed daily by both parents and teachers are common.

When we don't get the parents' cooperation, we still try to help the student—with the resource teacher for the learning disabled playing the "parent" role before school and in the afternoon.

Laura Bashlor
Sixth grade teacher
Gibraltar, Michigan

Got an Answer?

How do you deal with parents who insist on a specific teaching method or strategy?
Send your answer by regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Please include your job title and grade level.

Published respondents will receive a bright new *NEA Today* mug!

Communities

You know you've been successful when . . .

"People in the community attend school events outside the realm of athletics."

Michele Foibbro, library/media specialist, Mingo Junction, Ohio

Delight

Parents Respond to TLC

In rural West Virginia, families team with schools to tender lots of care on early education.

Forget the warm and fuzzy concept of TLC. In Monroe County, West Virginia, "TLC" stands for a pragmatic, community-wide program helping children from birth through age nine get a good start in school.

Teaming for Learning with the Community—TLC—"has created a bond" in a community where two-thirds of the students are eligible for federal free and reduced meals and where many parents lack transportation, says Kathy Martin, a second grade teacher at Union Elementary.

That bonding begins at birth. Working with the TLC program, staff from the federally funded Parents as Teachers program connect with families, often while the mother is still in the hospital, and start demonstrating developmentally appropriate activities that can help build learning skills.

Smoothing the transitions to and through school is another TLC priority. Schools now sponsor "move-up day," where students ease anxieties by meeting next year's teachers before summer break.

The program also focuses on identifying and addressing special needs early. Twice a year, a Kiddie Fair at the high school gym offers a wealth of free screenings. Coupled with the county's preschool and HeadStart programs, this "gives us a good handle on where our children are developmentally," says superintendent Lyn Guy.

Of 260 children in a recent kindergarten screening, notes Guy, only five hadn't been previously assessed.

"We're trying to get as many services as possible at school—to make it like a one-stop shopping or community center," says Martin.

Outside agencies train TLC participants in areas such as money management and nutrition.

A special education teacher trains parents on working with their children at home to advance their education.

Parent resource centers, with paid coordinators, have operated in the county's two elementary schools. The grant funding this part of the program has run its course, so educators and parents are now seeking ways to find the $20,000 a year it would take to restore the centers fully.

The outreach to parents has sparked a wave of volunteers—who sign up for more than field trips, says Martin. Parents, for example, run a "breakfast club" to keep kids active with movies and games during the time between their arrival and the start of class.

TLC, now in its sixth year, does require considerable collaboration. Martin is one of 50 representatives of schools, parents, and agencies throughout the rural county who meet three or four times a year. Subcommittees on wellness, education, parent involvement, and social services meet more frequently.

"We'd never had a forum before," Martin says. "We were all helping kids, but our efforts weren't coordinated until TLC."

Martin and her colleagues take information gleaned from TLC meetings back to their faculties so that classroom teachers, as well as administrators, are keyed in to health, social service, and other resources available for students and their families.

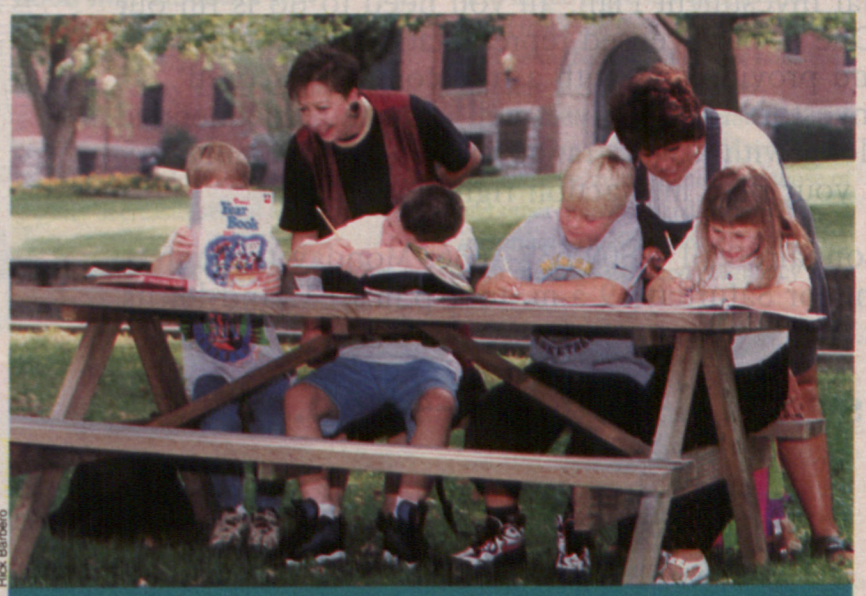
In the end, mutually rewarding relationships have developed in individual classrooms. Martin decided last year to progress with her class from first to second grade.

"The idea grew out of the sense of family that develops with TLC," she says.

Test scores took a significant jump the second year. "And at the end of second grade," notes Martin, "my students asked if I could teach them through college."

For More Information

Contact Kathy Martin at Union Elementary, 304/772-3032, or Monroe County Public Schools at 304/772-3094.



Rick Barbero

Teacher Kathy Martin (left) finds the community at her side—and on her side—when it comes to educating the children of Monroe County, West Virginia.

Idea Exchange

Muffins for Mom

To get parents more involved with our children's reading, we implemented the "Muffins for Mom and Doughnuts for Dad" program.

Once a month, about 45 minutes before school starts, we open up a couple of Title I rooms for children, their parents, and adult friends to come and read together.

We put out a variety of books, from very low-level patterned books to regular library-type books, for the K-5 students to choose from.

We provide muffins, doughnuts, juice, and coffee. A local business liked this idea so much that it is now funding the food and refreshments.

We had one RSVP for the first session—but ended up filling two rooms for an hour. The response from children and parents since has been excellent.

Richard Brisco
Portland, Oregon

Wish for the Holidays

Last year, our school sent each child home with a note stating that children who wanted to give their teacher a holiday gift could instead contribute a small amount of money toward something from which the entire school could benefit. The note emphasized that any giving was completely voluntary.

Jill Nysse
Winona, Minnesota

Works4Me
NEA's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? Pass along your tips to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org.

For more tips, check out NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me. To sign up, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me @list.nea.org.

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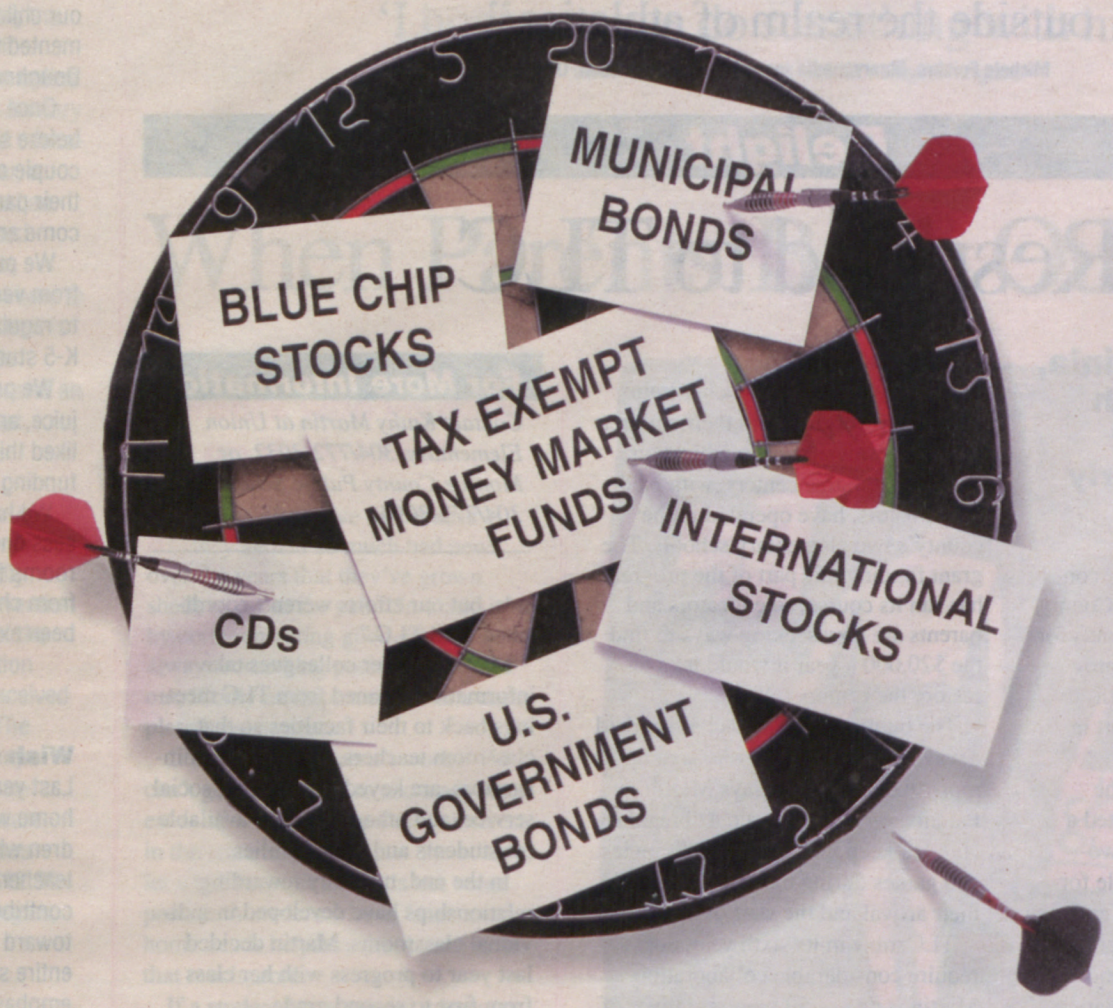

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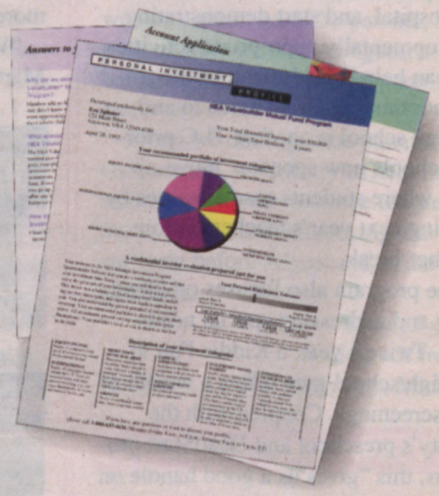

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Health

Keep Kids from Making Babies

Tamara Kreinin is director of state and local affairs for the National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy. She spoke recently with Moira Cook of NEA's Health Information Network on the latest news around curbing teen pregnancy.

There's been a recent decline in the birth rate among teens. What's the reason for the good news?

The research shows a slight decrease in sexual activity among teens and a large increase in contraception use, particularly the use of condoms.

I think these changes are really due to what has happened with HIV/AIDS. We in the teen pregnancy arena have not been as bold or aggressive as those in the AIDS community, but we have benefited from their success.

For those teens who do get pregnant—how does that impact their chance of graduating from high school?

Less than one-third of the teens who start families before the age of 18 ever complete high school.

We used to think teens got pregnant and then dropped out of school. We now know that teens often drop out of school and then get pregnant or cause a pregnancy.

We also know that about a quarter of our teen mothers will have a second baby within a year of their first baby.

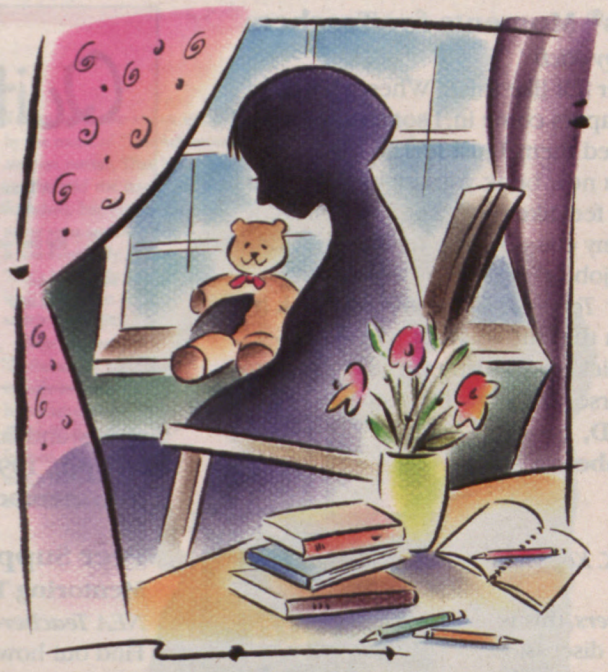
So prevention of a second pregnancy is significant, because that's when we often lose them. If they can delay the second pregnancy, then the teen mother is much more likely to get through school.

What role can schools play in preventing teen pregnancy?

Schools are a very good place for family life education and making sure that issues related to sex and relationships are addressed in some way.

Schools that keep their doors open after-school—with mentoring programs and youth development activities—can be a very valuable tool in preventing teen pregnancy.

Data from the Adolescent Health (AddHealth) Survey, the largest survey of adolescents, found that school connectedness is a key protective factor in preventing teenage pregnancy. Adults in schools play a very important role in assuring that students feel cared about and connected to the school community.



What qualities define curriculums that are effective in preventing teen pregnancy?

The curriculum must involve active learning. It has to give a clear message or messages. It must teach skills, not just provide information.

And the curriculum should address pressures to have sex—such as pressures sent through the media, peer pressures, and general societal pressures.

Does teaching about contraception increase the likelihood that students will engage in sexual activity?

About 15 studies tell us that teaching children to delay sexual activity while giving them information about contraceptive methods in no way increases sexual activity. In some studies, it slightly decreases sexual activity.

For those NEA members who can't talk about contraceptive methods in school, are there effective abstinence-only curriculums?

The jury is still out. We do not know if any abstinence-only curriculums are effective in changing teens' behavior.

Youth development activities such as community service, after-school programs, and tutoring can fall under the purview of an abstinence-only curriculum or program. And we do know that they have an impact in preventing teen pregnancy.

What else can NEA members do to help prevent teen pregnancy?

NEA members should be supportive adults in the lives of teens. NEA members should make sure people understand that even though we've had a decline in the birth rates, our rates are still very high in this country.

We still have nearly one million girls getting pregnant every year, and our rates are much higher than those of any other industrialized nation. It is important that NEA members send a clear message that teen pregnancy is not okay.

Resources

■ The National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy has many publications on teen pregnancy prevention, including *No Easy Answers*, a review of research on effective programs ($10 report, $1.50 summary); *Ten Tips for Parents To Help Their Children Avoid Teen Pregnancy* (up to 10 copies free); and, in 1999, *The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Tool Kit.* Call 202/ 261-5655 for details or check the Web at www.teenpregnancy.org.

■ *Sex etc.* is a teen-written newsletter that covers life choice issues including contraception and abstinence. Distributed free by the Network for Family Life Education at Rutgers University. Call 732/445-7929 or visit the Web at www.rci.rutgers.edu/sxetc.

■ Sociometrics' Program Archive on Sexuality, Health, and Adolescence develops products and services for practitioners working in the areas of teen pregnancy. Call 415/949-3282 or visit the Web at www.socio.com.

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network suggests the following helpful resources.

Can We Talk?

"Can We Talk?" is an interactive workshop series that helps parents enhance their role in their children's health and sexuality education. The creative, four-part workshops from the NEA Health Information Network help families talk about self-esteem, puberty and sexuality, mixed messages, and peer pressure. For more information about the "Can We Talk?" training package and training institutes, contact NEA HIN's automated hotline at 800/718-8387.

Contraception Options

"Considering Your Options," a fast-paced video from the NEA Health Information Network, combines animated segments where "Alex" goes online to learn more about his contraceptive options, with real teens discussing their choices and concerns about sexual activity and various birth control methods. The video covers the following methods of contraception: abstinence, condoms, birth control pills, Depo-Provera and Norplant, and emergency contraception. $15. To order, call 800/229-4200, Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-8 p.m. ET.

Counter Culture

Americans can choose from a growing number of over-the-counter medicines to treat an expanding range of health problems. *Nonprescription Medicines, What's Right for You?*—a guide developed in part by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration—addresses topics including medicine labeling, drug interactions, pregnancy and nursing, and proper dosages for children. For free copies, write the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009 or visit the Web at www.ndmainfo.org.

When Food Is a Foe

Nancy Kolodny offers a self-help guide for young adults struggling with self-image, self-esteem, and eating disorders in *When Food Is a Foe* (214 pp., $9.95 from Little Brown). Kolodny also invites readers of the book to E-mail her directly with questions or comments at foodsafoe@aol.com.

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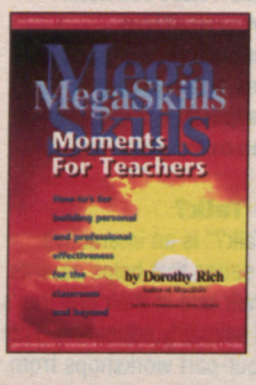


MegaSkills® Moments for Teachers

By Dr. Dorothy Rich

Have you ever felt like this?: "When a batch of homework papers come in, I sometimes wish I hadn't assigned them. I just feel so overloaded." If so, there's a new book you ought to read that can help you feel like this: "Today, a colleague dropped by my classroom to tell me she admired what a good job I was doing!" *MegaSkills Moments for Teachers* is the all-new book by Dorothy Rich that shows what you can do—easily and quickly—to turn everyday problem situations into opportunities for personal and professional growth.

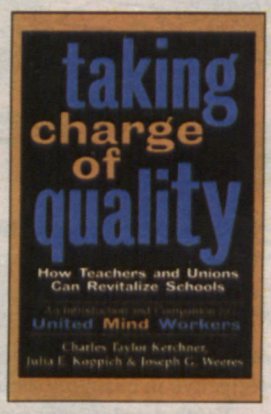
204 pp., 1998, Stock #2006-5-00-D,
Non-members $12.95, NEA Members $9.95

Taking Charge of Quality

By Charles Taylor Kerchner, Julia K. Koppich, and Joseph G. Weeres

A companion to *United Mind Workers*, this is the ultimate book-club/study-group discussion starter on New Unionism. This concise booklet offers a solid blueprint for improving teaching and learning, setting higher standards, and taking charge of the profession through peer review. Explore the role of teachers unions and the importance of teachers to American Democracy in the 21st century, by adding this book to your reading list today.

56 pp., 1998, Stock #2168-1-00-D,
Non-members $7.95, NEA Members $6.95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How Teachers and Unions Can Revitalize Schools
United Mind Workers
Charles Taylor Kerchner, Julia E. Koppich & Joseph G. Weeres

Separated by Sex: A Critical Look at Single-Sex Education for Girls

AAUW Educational Foundation

Many schools are experimenting with the single-sex approach to learning. This book examines the findings of the foremost educational scholars on single-sex education in grades K-12 to discover if girls learn better apart from boys. It includes a literature review and a summary of a forum that considered what role single sex classes and schools should play in education reform.

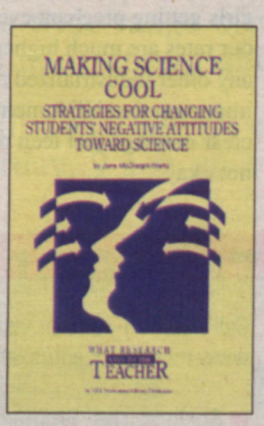
108 pp., 1998, Stock #2505-9-00-D,
Non-members $12.95, NEA Members $11.95

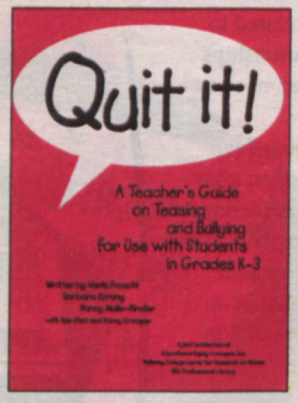
Making Science Cool: Strategies for Changing Students' Negative Attitudes Toward Science

By Jane McCraight-Wertz

Many students say science is boring. How can you counteract students' negative view of science? The answer is in *Making Science Cool,* where you'll discover the link between positive attitudes and student success; strategies for altering the classroom environment to make science exciting, accessible, and relevant; and ways to involve parents and peers in the process.

32 pp., 1998, Stock #1099-X-00-D,
Non-members $5.95, NEA Members $4.50





Quit It!: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Students in Grades K-3

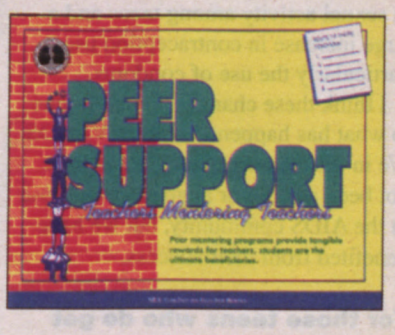
By Froschl, Sprung, Mullin-Rindler, Stein

Now you can "bullyproof" your K-3 classroom with this comprehensive teacher's guide. How can it help you cope with the serious problem of classroom bullying? This book's nine classroom lessons not only help you and your students create awareness but also give you the tools you need to explore strategies for prevention. Plus, you'll get ideas for physical games and exercises, reproducible worksheets, and family activity letters.

128 pp., 1998, Stock #1881-8-00-D,
Non-members $19.95, NEA Members $15.95

Peer Support: Teachers Mentoring Teachers

NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books



Find out how teachers across the nation are reaching out to their colleagues for advice and support through peer mentoring programs. Learn how they set up mentoring programs, created effective collegial partnerships, and gained insight into their roles as mentors and mentees. Whether you are already involved in a similar program, getting ready to start one in your district, or just interested in exploring this topic, you'll find this book a valuable resource.

96 pp., 1998, Stock #2913-5-00-D,
Non-members $12.95, NEA Members $9.95

How To Get Grants and Free Stuff

NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books

Running out of ideas to enhance your school's limited resources? This book tells you where to seek sources for grants, how to decide which grants to apply for, and how to maximize your chances for success You'll get expert advice on how to effectively write grants by following a simple formula. You'll also learn not only helpful tips on the essentials to include when applying for grants, but also the fatal flaws to avoid. Finally, you'll discover that getting free resources for your students is often just a matter of asking, as enterprising teachers share their strategies for getting free stuff—from computer equipment and technical support to sports gear and training support.

96 pp., 1998, Stock #2914-3-00-D,
Non-members $12.95, NEA Members $9.95

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Rights Watch

Academic Freedom Takes a Hit

Courts have sent the message: It's okay to fire teachers who use controversial materials.

This has not been a good year for teacher free speech. The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in June that a suburban St. Louis school district did not violate the First Amendment when it fired NEA member Cissy Lacks for allowing her high school students to write and perform skits containing "street language."

Also in June, the Colorado Supreme Court upheld the dismissal of NEA member Al Wilder for showing his high school seniors the movie *1900*, Bernardo Bertolucci's acclaimed—but R-rated—film.

And, as reported in this column last May, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals earlier this year rejected NEA member Margaret Boring's claim that she was wrongfully punished for selecting a controversial play for her students to perform in a state competition in North Carolina.

"A public high school teacher," the Fourth Circuit said, has no "First Amendment right to participate in the makeup of the school curriculum."

These three decisions send teachers a frightening message: Those who stray beyond the narrow confines of the approved curriculum by using controversial teaching methods or materials do so at their own risk.

Cissy Lacks was a 23-year veteran English teacher when she was sacked in 1995 for allowing her students to use profanity in the plays they wrote and performed in her creative writing class.

A federal district court in 1996 held that the school board violated her right to academic freedom, discriminated against her because of her race, and lacked "good cause" to dismiss her under the state tenure law.

Lacks won $826,000 in damages and a reinstatement order. But last June, the court of appeals reversed on all counts and threw out the award.

For years, Lacks had used the controversial student-centered teaching method, a technique that allows students initially to express themselves in creative works without censorship. She believed that this method was an effective means of getting reticent students to write.

In court, Lacks argued that no administrator had ever told her not to use this teaching technique, and she cited numerous instances where other teachers allowed students to read profanity out loud from works of literature.

Rejecting her claims, the Eighth Circuit said that the district's student conduct code prohibiting student profanity gave her plenty of notice that allowing students to use foul language—even in the context of a classroom exercise—was not allowed. Such a policy, the court said, does not violate the First Amendment.

As to the race claim, the court held that, while there was evidence of racial animus toward her on the part of the administrators who recommended her termination, there was no evidence that the individual board members who made the final decision to fire her were also racially biased.

In an editorial, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* lamented that the court's decision "limited the freedom of teachers to use controversial teaching methods to stir the intellectual curiosity of their students."

And at a June press conference, Lacks warned, "If this can happen to someone like me, who has worked in good faith and tried to follow school policy, it could happen again—and it will happen again."

Like Cissy Lacks, Al Wilder was fired midyear after a 25-year teaching career. His crime? Showing a controversial R-rated movie to his logic and debate class of 17- and 18-year olds without getting his principal's prior approval, as required by the "controversial materials" policy of Colorado's Jefferson County School District.

At the hearing, Bernardo Bertolucci, the Italian director of the movie, testified by telephone on Wilder's behalf.

The Colorado Court of Appeals last year ruled that the firing violated Wilder's First Amendment rights, but the state supreme court reversed that by a 4-3 vote.

YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT ME, without you have read a book
by the name of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," but that
ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain,
and he told the truth, mainly. T
stretched, but mainly he told
never seen anybody but li
it was Aunt Polly, or the
Tom's Aunt Polly, she
is all told about in
with some stretch
Now the way
me found the
it made us rich.
It was an awfu
Judge Thatche
fetched us a d
than a body co
she took me fo
Bob James

In rejecting his academic freedom claim, the high court said, "It cannot be left to individual teachers to teach what they please."

A teacher, the court added, "has no First Amendment right to use non-approved controversial learning resources in his classroom without following the District's [controversial materials] policy."

The dissent argued that Wilder didn't have "fair warning" that a film like *1900* was a "controversial learning resource."

Dissenting Justice (and former sixth grade teacher) Gregory Hobbs, Jr. eloquently explained the abiding value of academic freedom:

"When we strip teachers of their professional judgment, we forfeit the educational vitality we prize. When we quell controversy for the sake of congeniality, we deprive democracy of its mentors."

It's not yet time to close the book on these cases. This summer NEA asked the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the decision in the *Boring* case. The Court likely will announce this fall whether it will hear the appeal.

NEA also filed a motion last July asking the Eighth Circuit Court to rehear the *Lacks* case, but the prospects of a favorable ruling are not bright.

A decision whether to seek Supreme Court review of the *Wilder* decision is still pending.

— Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Protecting Yourself From the Blows

What do these three devastating decisions mean for K-12 classroom teachers? How can you challenge your students with stimulating—and controversial—material and still keep your job?

■ Ask your local bargaining representative to negotiate protection for "academic freedom" into your next collective bargaining agreement.

Arbitrators—those who interpret and enforce collective bargaining agreements—are much more sympathetic to teachers' claims of academic freedom than state and federal courts.

NEA locals in Hawaii and Delaware, for example, have won important arbitration decisions upholding academic freedom. In both cases, the arbitrator relied on pertinent clauses in the bargaining agreements to strike down school district policies prohibiting teachers from showing R-rated movies in class.

■ Fully comply with any school policy regarding the use of "controversial" materials in the classroom. As the *Wilder* case illustrates, failure to obey even a vague or ambiguous policy can lead to termination.

If the policy requires prior approval, be able to explain and defend the educational suitability of the controversial material or technique. If the administrator decides to squelch your creativity, challenge the decision through any available appeal, such as a grievance or hearing before the school board, and mobilize collegial and community support.

■ Even though it may smack of self-censorship, you will be less likely to get into trouble if you steer clear of materials containing extensive profanity or sexually explicit language. These sorts of materials simply raise a red flag. A creative educator should seek out ways to teach controversial and challenging ideas without utilizing language that many may find offensive.

—M.D.S.

To read the court decisions, visit the Web. Go to www.cobar.org/coappcts/sc1998/sc0629f.htm for the Wilder case. The Lacks decision is at http://ls.wustl.edu/8th.cir/Opinions/980622/971859.P8.

Bits & Bytes

Bytes for Beginners

When I try to go to educational Web sites, my school's blocking software stops me, and I have to wait for an administrator *and* lab technician to unlock my computer. I understand the need for security, but this is frustrating! What can I do?

You raise a hot issue that's being debated at the national, state, and local levels: To what extent should schools' access to the Internet be controlled, and how?

Generally, educators' and students' Internet access is spelled out in a school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

Your first step should be to review your school's AUP to determine to what extent and for what purpose access to the Net is controlled.

Once you've had a closer look at your school's rationale for employing blocking software, you'll be able to convey your concerns in the context of the AUP—and your administrator may better understand your need for unfettered Net access.

If that doesn't work, some (limited) options are still available:

■ Ask your administrator to help you form a committee to review and rewrite the existing AUP in an effort to make the Net a more efficient and effective classroom tool.

■ Ask your lab technician to "cache"—download and store—your favorite sites to your computer's hard drive, and to configure your browser and blocking software to allow you to browse "offline." Note, however, that you should always ask permission from the publisher of any Web site before you cache its contents.

■ DON'T "hack" or otherwise find a way around the blocking software. At best, you'll get reprimanded by your boss and be labeled for life as a "techie" by your peers. At worse, it might be grounds for dismissal.

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or write to Dear Webeditor, NEA Center for Education Technology, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Check out www.nea.org/cet for more questions from beginners and answers from the experts.

My favorite Web site . . .

The Journey North (www.learner.org/jnorth) monitors monarch butterflies. Students can report their sightings and communicate with classes around the world.

Ann Min, seventh/eighth grade science teacher, Crystal Lake, Illinois

Wired Classroom

Join an Undersea Search

"It's not the *Titanic*, and it's not as deep. But it has been underwater longer, and it hasn't been found. Yet."

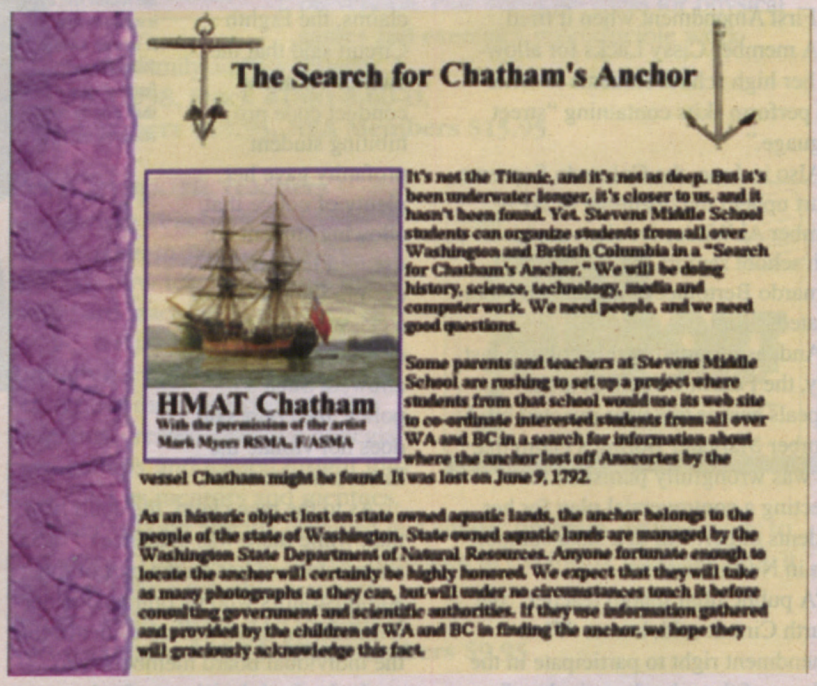
With these words, Stevens Middle School's (Washington) Web site kicks off the search for *Chatham*'s anchor, which was lost off Anacortes on June 9, 1792.

We want to involve students and schools across the country in this project. We invite students to contribute in any way they wish—perhaps with a paper on what life aboard ship would have been like, a drawing of someone in a costume from 1792, or a history of the native nations of the area.

Of course, any ideas about how to locate or retrieve the anchor would be welcome as well.

Work submitted to the project will be posted on our Web site. For more information or to join our search, go to www.pasd.wednet.edu/school/sms/anchor.

Phil Morgan-Ellis
Computer support/orchestra
Port Angeles, Washington


The Search for Chatham's Anchor
HMAT Chatham
With the permission of the artist
Mark Myers RSMA, F/ASMA
It's not the Titanic, and it's not as deep. But it's been underwater longer, it's closer to us, and it hasn't been found. Yet. Stevens Middle School students can organize students from all over Washington and British Columbia in a "Search for Chatham's Anchor." We will be doing history, science, technology, media and computer work. We need people, and we need good questions.
Some parents and teachers at Stevens Middle School are rushing to set up a project where students from that school would use its web site to co-ordinate interested students from all over WA and BC in a search for information about where the anchor lost off Anacortes by the vessel Chatham might be found. It was lost on June 9, 1792.
As an historic object lost on state owned aquatic lands, the anchor belongs to the people of the state of Washington. State owned aquatic lands are managed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. Anyone fortunate enough to locate the anchor will certainly be highly honored. We expect that they will take as many photographs as they can, but will under no circumstances touch it before consulting government and scientific authorities. If they use information gathered and provided by the children of WA and BC in finding the anchor, we hope they will graciously acknowledge this fact.

Connecting With Students

Last summer I created an interactive Web site that I linked to my high school's home page.

Students visited the page to discuss the upcoming year and ask me for advice on college selection. The kids that I coach kept me informed about their summer fitness programs.

During the first month, I had almost 500 visits to the site! Check it out at home.att.net/~RJagar.

Robert Jagar
English teacher/coach
East Rutherford, New Jersey

Foreign Language Skills

In my Spanish class, students create electronic résumés with HyperStudio software, which lets them combine text, sound, and visuals.

The students present their résumés in class with the aid of an LCD plate, which projects their HyperStudio files from the computer monitor onto a screen on the wall.

Using the LCD plate gives students a chance to talk about their friends, families, hobbies, activities, dreams, ambitions, and talents in a way that stimulates discussion. The students don't read their résumés off the computer screen—they actively participate in the presentation of the material.

As a result, the students' oral communication skills have increased dramatically. Through technology, the students see Spanish as an enjoyable way of expressing themselves.

Jerie Milici
High school Spanish teacher
Greenwich, Connecticut

Multimedia Projects

My fifth graders use HyperStudio multimedia software to combine text, graphics, sound, and movement into animated presentations.

HyperStudio can be integrated easily into any grade-level curriculum. Here are some of the most successful HyperStudio activities I've developed for my classes:

■ Locating and placing state capitals on a blank U.S. map, then adding sound of the correct pronunciation and graphics of landforms, vegetation, and historical events. We finish this exercise by adding the sounds of a limerick for each region.

■ Using HyperStudio's drawing tools to make a colonial ship—and adding a cannon containing animated cannon balls as well as tea crates going overboard. We integrate narration about the Boston Tea Party.

■ Using drawing tools to recreate the village we saw on a field trip to New Salem, Illinois—along with buttons that provide narration.

■ Writing, drawing, and animating Beanie Baby fables, as well as printing the pages for books.

■ Recreating students' books into animated stories.

■ Making multiple-choice vocabulary games for tournaments.

Arlene Giesel
Fifth grade teacher
Normal, Illinois

*Want a weekly tip on using technology? Subscribe to the Wired Classroom E-mail list. Just send an E-mail to **join-etoolsweekly@list.nea.org** (no subject or message needed).*

My favorite software . . .

The Geometer's Sketchpad (Key Curriculum Press, 800/995-MATH, $169.95) is wonderful software for discovery learning in geometry.

Loraine Young, high school math teacher, Ringgold, Georgia

Friendly User

Handywoman's Special

When she couldn't find the right software, a Pennsylvania teacher developed her own.

Who:
Michele DePrille, special education teacher, Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV, New Castle, Pennsylvania

E-mail:
m_deprille@lnwm.miu4.k12.pa.us

Inspiration:
When DePrille started shopping for educational software for her eight students—all of whom have profound mental and physical disabilities—she quickly learned that there wasn't much to choose from.

"I couldn't find good programs that appealed to them," says DePrille, who teaches at Neshannock Junior-Senior High School.

"A lot of the available software—even though it's for teenagers—assumes that, because they have a preschool-level intelligence, all they're interested in is Sticky Bear and Big Bird," she says. "They're not. Quite frankly, they're offended."

Then one day, as DePrille was helping a student play a game—the student was clicking the mouse to build a snowman piece by piece—DePrille had a "click" of her own.

"I found myself thinking, they did that in HyperStudio," she says. "I thought, I can do that too!"

DePrille knew just the basics of HyperStudio software, which lets users create multimedia programs—and that was enough to get her going.

Using a digital camera, she took the students' photos and integrated them with sound files to make a guessing game. After hearing "Knock, Knock! Who's There?" students click the mouse to reveal a classmate bit by bit.

"It's hard to resist anything that's about you," DePrille says. "So by designing stuff with their pictures, I found students are many more times likely to access it and use it again and again."

Her students are all non-verbal, yet DePrille found a way for them to lend their voices to a program as well.

"My kids love Halloween," she says. "I took some generic Halloween clip art and made it so that if you clicked on eyeballs, they made noises. I put in the students' own voices—they could groan or grunt."

Lesson:
Writing her own computer programs has given DePrille new ways to measure students' progress.

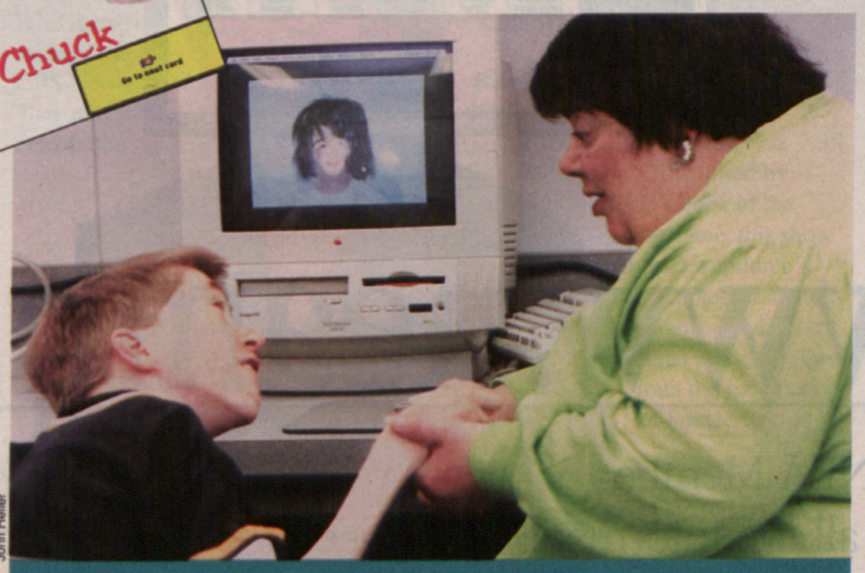
"I was curious to see if they could recognize their own name in print," she says. "They can't tell me if they can."

So she created a program that displays a name and several different photos on the screen, while a voice prompts students to click on the photo that matches the name.

"I was floored," DePrille says. "They all knew who was who. All those years that you tend to label everything—their lunchboxes, walkers—pay off."

Click:
DePrille had no training in HyperStudio—or even a manual—yet she was determined that her students be part of the information age.

"I knew elementary school kids use HyperStudio," she says. "So I said to myself, 'Pretend you're a kid and just dive in.' I knew that if I could leave my adult self at the door, I could do it."



John Heller

The computer games Pennsylvania teacher Michele DePrille created—featuring her students' faces—engage and challenge them. "They know that when we turn on the computer, something good is going to happen," she says.

Resources

Looking for help with integrating technology into special ed classes? Here are some of DePrille's favorite Web sites:

- *Special Ed Resources on the Internet—www.nhgs.tec.va.us/SpecialEd/sped_resources.html*
- *Equal Access to Software and Information—www.rit.edu/~easi*
- *Best Information on the Net—www.sau.edu/cwis/internet/wild/Disabled/disindex.htm*

New & Noteworthy

Free Filtering Software
EdView is giving free copies of its Internet filtering software to NEA members for one year's use.

NEA neither supports nor discourages filtering software but maintains that the decision to use or not use it should be made on a local level.

You can download your free copy of the software through the end of 1998 by going to www.edview.com/offer.

College Search Engine
CollegeBot, the "Concentrated College Crawler," is a new search engine that only searches for information about colleges. Try it out at www.collegebot.com.

Create Online Quizzes
Funbrain (www.funbrain.com) has opened the Quiz Lab, where teachers can create quizzes online for free.

When students finish a quiz, the results are E-mailed to the teacher, along with the most frequently missed questions.

Debating Technology
The Millennium Project is a new online mediated forum to discuss the developing role of technology in education.

Discussions will focus on "problems, challenges, and creative failures in a wide range of educational contexts." The site—millennium.aed.org—also features a resource library of background reading.

Help With Tech Terms
Are you stuck on the meaning of a technical term? The Techweb Technology Encyclopedia will define it for you. Go to www.techweb.com/encyclopedia.

Talk to Us

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to **wiredclassroom@list.nea.org**.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to **myfavoritetech@list.nea.org**.

Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

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Heads Up!

TV Tips

A Knight in Camelot

ABC, Sunday, November 8, 7-9 p.m. ET. Based on Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, this "Wonderful World of Disney" presentation stars Whoopi Goldberg as a scientist who goes back in time to the court of King Arthur and tries to make modern "improvements" to medieval ways.

The Tempest

NBC, Sunday, November 15, 9-11 p.m. ET. Based on Shakespeare's tale of love, betrayal, and freedom, this film is set in a Mississippi bayou during the Civil War.

Mama Flora's Family

CBS, November 15-17, 9-11 p.m. ET. This miniseries takes up where *Roots* left off. Mama Flora watches the next three generations of her family live the ever-changing Black American experience. Note to teachers: The film includes some strong language.

Sesame Street

PBS, Monday, November 16, check local listings for time. This beloved preschool series begins its 30th season with special celebration activities, including a new motion picture. Details on the Web at www.pbs.org/kids/sesame or www.ctw.org.

America 1900

PBS, Wednesday, November 18, 8-11 p.m. ET. Going back to the year 1900, this episode of *The American Experience* uses famous figures and ordinary citizens to examine a single year and explain the forces that shaped an entire century. For a teacher's guide for middle and high school students, go to www.pbs.org/amex. To buy the video, call 800/424-7963.

More Favorite Toys

Discovery Channel, Wednesday, November 18, 10-11 p.m. ET. Using vintage television commercials and visits to toy factories, this special offers a behind-the-scenes look at the making of classic toys. Featured playthings include Play-doh (originally created as a non-toxic wallpaper cleaner) and Silly Putty (invented during World War II as a substitute for rubber). Rated TV-G.

Antiques Roadshow Jr.

PBS, Monday, November 23, 9-10:30 p.m. ET. This special version of the popular antiques show features collecting tips and field trips tailor-made for young people. Host Chris Jussel is joined by a 13-year-old co-host for on-the-spot appraisals by experts and interviews with America's youngest collectors. Visit www.pbs.org/antiques for details.

People of the Century: The Time 100

CBS, early December, check local listings. This is the third installment of the CBS News/*Time* magazine celebration of 100 people who have shaped the last 100 years. This episode names the 20 most influential builders and titans of the century. For a teacher's guide, call Time Education Programs at 800/882-0852 or go to www.time.com.

Friends for Life: Living with AIDS

Disney Channel, Tuesday, December 1, 8 p.m. ET. Premiering on World AIDS Day, this documentary takes an inspirational look at kids living with HIV and AIDS. Both healthy kids and those affected by the virus talk about how HIV and AIDS have affected their lives and about the need for friendship and understanding.

Cold War

CNN, Sundays, November, December, check local listings. This 24-part documentary series continues this month with the following episodes: Reds (1947-1953), Sputnik (1949-1961), The Wall (1958-1963), and Cuba (1959-1962). For more information, go to the Web at http://CNN.com/Cold War.

Rosie O'Donnell's Kids are Punny

HBO, Sunday, December 6, 7:30-8 p.m. ET. Inspired by Rosie's book of the same name, this show includes children's anecdotes, animated parables, and personal stories to illustrate the importance of humor.

KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., provides these listings. For additional listings and information, go to the Web at www.kidsnet.org.

school stories

Want to know what's *really* happening in America's schools? *School Stories*, produced by NEA and The Learning Channel, offers you an insider's view on tough issues on and off campus. Take note of the new day and time, and don't forget to set your VCR!

Plugging Into Technology

Thursday, November 5, 11:30 a.m. ET. Five years ago, with the help of a federal grant, a school in one of America's poorest counties joined the technology revolution. Now look at White River High School in South Dakota, where students roam with cameras and computers, and the school has its own Web page.

Connecting With Kids

Thursday, November 12, 11:30 a.m. ET. A visit with two veteran NEA members and award-winning teachers—both known for getting the best from their students. Watch them work magic in the classroom.

Better Business, Stronger Schools

Thursday, November 19, 11:30 a.m. ET. What happens when business works hand-in-hand with schools? In North Carolina, the Siemens Corporation steps in to help build a state-of-the-art training center and launch the careers of local kids.

Putting Kids First

Thursday, December 3, 11:30 a.m. ET. At Teachers Memorial Elementary School in Kinston, North Carolina, the staff will do anything for the kids and community—and it shows. Find out how they're working magic for their students.

High-Stakes Testing

Thursday, December 10, 11:30 a.m. ET. Several years ago, only 21 percent of Milwaukee's students passed a math exam required for graduation. Recently, 90 percent of seniors passed the same exam. Here's the story of a community that rallied to help its students.

Bonus for NEA members: Each episode of *School Stories* is available on video. To order tapes, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200.

Heads Up

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Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET

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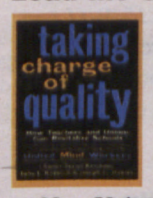
Hispanic Heritage

In *Thirty Million Strong: Reclaiming the Hispanic Image in American Culture*, award-winning author and Arte Publico Press founder Nicolas Kanellos exposes media myths and historical oversights to bring to light the contributions Hispanics have made in the United States from the age of exploration and conquest to the present. $19.95 plus $4 s&h. Contact Fulcrum Books, 350 Indiana St., Suite 350, Golden, CO 80401, 800/992-2908. On the Web: www.fulcrum-books.com.

Media Analysis

Changing the World Through Media Education is a new media literacy guidebook from the Just Think Foundation. The book encourages students to think critically about media representations of social issues such as violence, racism and role models—and shows how students can create meaningful messages of their own. $17.95 plus $3.95 s&h (CA residents, add $1.30 sales tax). Just Think Foundation, Attn: Rimga Kondratas, 80 Liberty Way, Suite 1, Sausalito, CA 94965. Or call 415/289-0122, ext. 136. On the Web: www.justthink.org.

Lead the Charge



Taking Charge of Quality: How Teachers and Unions Can Revitalize Schools—the ultimate book club or study group discussion starter on New Unionism—provides an introduction and companion to *United Mind Workers*, the most provocative educational reform book of the '90s. $7.95 plus s&h for NEA members. Stock #2168-1-00-FF. Contact the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200.

Learning To Research

Time for your students to learn how to research the right way? Start with *The New York Public Library Kid's Guide to Research*. Children's author Deborah Heiligman and New York librarians offer advice for kids ages 9-14 on every stage of the research process, including tips for how to use the Internet safely and efficiently. $14.95 plus $2.25 s&h. Stock #0-590-30715-0. Contact Scholastic Order Processing, 2931 East McCarty St., Jefferson City, MO 65101, 800/724-6527(push #3 at the prompt). On the Web, check out www.scholastic.com.

Heads Up

Bread and Roses
Women of Hope: African Americans Who Made a Difference offers striking reproductions of images of African-American women pioneers from the Bread and Roses poster series—a cultural project of 1199 National Health and Human Services Employees—plus concise, insightful biographies by Joyce Hansen, a New York City schoolteacher for 22 years. $16.95 plus $2.25 s&h. Contact Scholastic Inc., 2931 E. McCarty St., Jefferson City, MO 65101, 800/325-6149.

Designing Playgrounds
Students can exercise their engineering muscle as well as their sense of fun with *Designing Playgrounds,* a Math Project Series book by Jan Ham. The book explores everything from physics and safety regulations to drawing blueprints and writing building contracts. $12.95 plus $2.50 s&h. Cuisenaire, Dale Seymour Publications, P.O. Box 5026, White Plains, NY 10602-5026, 800/872-1100.

Multi-Cultural Learning
Want to spice up your classroom with some Zambian cuisine? How about a cultural fashion show? *Looking at Ourselves and Others*, a Peace Corps publication, is full of creative lesson plans, stories and worksheets on multicultural understanding for students in grades 3-12. $8. Stock #056000-00053-4. Call the U.S. Government Printing Office, 202/512-1800.

A Century of Stamps
If you want a fun, interactive way to engage your students in learning about the 20th century, the United States Postal Service's Celebrate the Century™ Education Series is a great tool to make it happen. Teachers receive six decade-specific education kits covering the entire 20th century. Free. To enroll, call 800/450-INFO.

Treasury of Quotations
Many of life's important lessons can be learned in *Scholastic's Treasury of Quotations for Children*. This handy book not only lists valuable quotes from the world's most accomplished individuals, it also contains minor biographies on every person quoted. More than 1,200 quotations, from ancient times to the present. $16.95 plus $2.25 s&h. Stock #0-590-27146-6. Contact Scholastic Order Processing, 2931 East McCarty St., Jefferson City, MO 65101, 800/724-6527. You can find it on the Web at www.scholastic.com.

Safe Schools
Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools was produced at President Clinton's request by the National Association of School Psychologists and the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice for the U.S. Department of Education. Includes details on what to look for—early warning signs—and what to do—how to create an action plan. On the Web: www.naspweb.org/center.html.

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Heads Up

Awards

All-USA Teacher Team

USA Today recently elected 23 of the nation's outstanding teachers to its first All-USA Teacher Team. A dozen of them are NEA members.

They are: Carol Antes, Newark, Delaware; Elizabeth Heartwell Belcher, Colonial Heights, Virginia; Diane Bencik, Troy, Michigan; Curtis Biffle, Decatur, Alabama; Ginney Bohannon, Las Vegas, Nevada; Jimmy B. Furlow, Chandler, Arizona; Chloe Garth-Elkins, Chattanooga, Tennessee; Viken Hovsepian, Glendale, California; Ruth Elaine Maenpaa, Thorton, Colorado; Carolyn Shuman, Petersburg, West Virginia; James Adrian Pippin, Jr., Columbus, Georgia; and Coleen Collins Cotton, Columbus, Georgia.

Journalism Winners

The Dow Jones Newspaper Fund recently named NEA member Kathleen Zwiebel, a teacher at Pottsville Area High School in Pennsylvania, as its 1998 National High School Journalism Teacher of the Year.

In addition, two NEA members were cited as "distinguished advisers"—Elizabeth Granger from Indianapolis, Indiana, and David Wiegand from Wausau, Wisconsin.

Three NEA members were named "special recognition advisers"—Donald Bott from Stockton, California; Lora Geftic from Hasbrouck, New Jersey; and Larry Parker Haynes from Montevallo, Alabama.

Excellence In Teaching

The National Council of Negro Women recently named Roselyn Lewis, a teacher at the Whitefoord Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia, as the national winner of its 1998 Excellence In Teaching Award.

NEA members named as regional winners include Cynthia Dixon-Fernandes, an English and reading teacher in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Joyce Willard Teal, a reading teacher in Dallas, Texas.

Counselor of the Year

The American School Counselors Association honored NEA member Cathy Walters Gonzales, a counselor at North Hall High School in DeKalb County, Georgia, by naming her the 1997-'98 Secondary Counselor of the Year. Gonzales has won similar titles in DeKalb County and in the state of Georgia.

Technology Winners

Dozens of teachers from 14 different countries recently received technology grants from EDS, one of the nation's largest information technology services. NEA members Patsy Phegley and Charles Svaluto, both from Michigan, received $1,500 grants to further education through technology.

Svaluto says he will use the money to purchase a digital camera, math software, motor set kits, and Lego amusement park kits for his students. Phelgy plans use her grant to help her students create a monthly newsletter.

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Heads Up

Math Teachers

The Cuisenaire/Dale Seymour Publications Outstanding Math Teacher Award is open to mathematic teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools. Eligible teachers must be nominated by a supervisor or school administrator.

Winners receive a certificate and educational materials. Deadline: March 15, 1999. For details, call 800/237-3142, ext. 5299. On the Web: www.cuisenaire.com.

Unsung Heroes

Reliastar and Northern Life are sponsoring the 1999 Education's Unsung Heroes Awards. Teachers, principals, classified staff and paraprofessionals are eligible to apply.

One hundred finalists will receive $2,000, and the three top finalists will receive prizes of $25,000, $10,000 and $5,000 to further educational programs in their schools or districts. Deadline: November 15.

Contact Northern Life's Education's Unsung Heroes Awards Programs, c/o CSFA, 1505 Riverview Road, P.O. Box 297, St. Peter, MN 56082, 800/ 426-7050. Fax: 507/931-2103. On the Web: www.unsungheroes.com.

Hall of Fame

If you have at least 20 years of teaching experience, you may be eligible for the Eighth Annual National Teachers Hall of Fame Induction Program. Deadline: January 2. For nomination forms, call 800/96TEACH or write the National Teachers Hall of Fame, Attn: Selection Committee, 1320 C of E Dr., Emporia, KS 66801.

Reading Hero

Random House Children's Publishing and First Book have created a Reading Hero Award to honor educators who have "displayed an extraordinary commitment to nurturing young readers."

Random House will select a hero every month through February. Each month's winner will receive a $1,000 Random House gift certificate.

For details on how to nominate an individual, write to First Book, Attention: Reading Hero Awards, 1319 F Street, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20004. Fax: 202/628-1258.

Grants

Gardening

Does your school have a gardening program? Would you like to start one? The National Gardening Association will offer 300 beginner kits, including tools, seeds, plants, garden products, and educational materials. Programs involving at least 15 children between the ages of three and 18 are eligible to win. Deadline: November 15.

In addition, the Mailorder Gardening Association's "Kids Growing with Dutch Bulbs" will give 40,000 flower bulbs to 200 schools nationwide. Deadline: April 1.

For more information, write to either "Garden Grants Department PS" or "Bulbs"—both at the National Gardening Association, Dept. NEA, 180 Flynn Ave., Burlington, VT 05401, 800/ 538-7476 ext. 607. Send E-mail to eddept@garden.org On the Web: www2.garden.org/nga.

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Heads Up

Teacher Study in Japan

The Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program will offer 600 grants for fully-funded 3-week study visits to Japan in 1999 to teachers in grades 1-12 and administrators. Contact the Institute of International Education at 888-527-2636 or www.iie.org/pgms/fmf for applications. Deadline: January 11, 1999.

Toyota Tapestry Grants

Toyota, in partnership with the National Science Teachers Association, is offering 50 grants of up to $10,000 to fund science education—specifically environmental education and physical sciences—in grades K-12. Deadline: January.

For details, contact Tapestry, National Science Teachers Association, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201-3000, 800/807-9852. To be added to the mailing list for applications, send E-mail to pbowers@nsta.org.

Announcement

UniServ Interns

The NEA Affirmative Action UniServ Intern Program is seeking motivated and committed ethnic minority and women leaders.

To be eligible, you must be an active member of NEA—and willing to relocate for future employment purposes.

Those chosen for the program will participate in a five-week NEA-paid training program in Washington, D.C.—July 11 through August 11, 1999. Selected applicants will then spend three months in the field with a NEA mentor.

December 11, 1998 is the deadline for NEA to receive applications for the internship program. For more information, contact Brenda Vincent, Membership and Affiliates, National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N. W.,Washington, D.C. 20036-3290.

Contests

Space Camp

Lanacane is kicking off its second "Itching to Know Science Contest" for students in grades K-6. The grand prize: a trip to U.S. Space Camp.

To enter, students must send in interesting questions they have about space. The top 10 most interesting questions will be answered by a real NASA astronaut. Deadline: May 1.

For details, write to Lanacane Itching To Know Science Contest "Entry Forms," P.O. Box 328-LC, White Plains, NY 10602. On the Web: www.lanacane.com.

Nick's Teacher Contest

Nickelodeon's Bright Orange Teacher Contest will honor teachers who have created new and innovative ways to motivate their students in grades 1-8. Entrants must submit a lesson plan along with an application.

The grand prize winner will travel to a taping of Nick News, serve on the Nickelodeon Educator Panel, and win prizes. Other winners will receive prize packets and will be listed on Nickelodeon's teacher Web site.

Entries must be received no later than November 20. Contact Nickelodeon's Bright Orange Teacher Contest, P.O. 979, New York, New York 10108, 800/595-1241. On the Web: teachers.nick.com.

ExploraVison Science

In cooperation with Toshiba, the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) is sponsoring the ExploraVision Awards, the "world's largest science contest" open to students in grades K-12.

To enter, students must work in teams of three or four and write essays on their visions of the future. Regional winners then produce a video of their ideas. Deadline: February 3.

A dozen first place teams and eight second place teams will be selected as national winners. Winning students will receive $10,000 or $5,000 savings bonds. All students and advisers that enter the contest will get a gift.

Contact Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Awards, National Science Teachers Association, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201, 703/243-7100, ext. 392. Look for details on the Web: www.toshiba.com/tai/exploravision/index3.htm.

Engineering

Attention future scientists and engineers: Duracell and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) are sponsoring a competition open to students in grades 7-12 who design and build inventions powered by Duracell batteries.

Prizes include savings bonds for winning students. Sponsoring teachers can win gift certificates for computer equipment and publications. Starter kits are available for students who need help with electronics. Deadline: January 15.

For details, contact Duracell/NSTA Scholarship Competition, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201-3000, 888/255-4242. On the Web: www.nsta.org/programs/duracell.shtml.

Young Producers

The Earth & Sky radio series is sponsoring the 1999 Young Producers Contest for teams of students in grades K-12 who record a 90-second science program on cassette.

Earth & Sky will select five winning teams. The members of the grand prize

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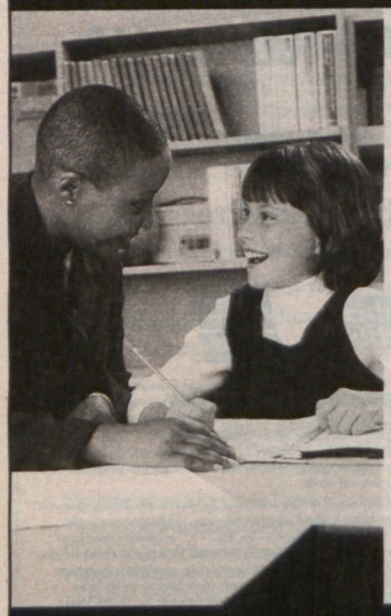

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Heads Up

winning team will receive $1,000 savings bonds, while the runners-up will get $500 bonds. Winning teams will also have their entries played on the air. Deadline: December 15.

For details, call 512/477-4441. On the Web: www.earthsky.com.

Computer Arts

Imation Corp. is accepting entries for its Second Annual Imation Computer Arts Scholarship Program for high school students working in computer-generated art.

In partnership with the National Art Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators, Imation will select 25 finalists to receive $1,000 scholarships. Eligible students must be nominated by their school. Deadline: December 15. Call 888/466-3456 or Fax Jacqueline Berry at 651/704-3892 for a school entry packet.

Fellowships

Holocaust Education

The Mandel Teacher Fellowship Program is looking for up to 25 secondary educators interested in attending a five-day, all-expense paid summer institute on Holocaust education sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. To qualify, teachers and librarians must work in U.S. schools and have five years of experience teaching about the Holocaust.

For more information, contact Stephen Fienberg at 202/488-0456 or send E-mail to sfeinberg@ushmm.org. Send letters to Mandel Teacher Fellowship Program, Education Division, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, S.W., Washington, DC 20024-2150. On the Web: www.ushmm.org.

Study the Constitution

The James Madison Fellowship Foundation, dedicated to the teaching of the Constitution in the nation's schools, will award fellowships to American history, American government, and social studies teachers in grades 7-12.

Recipients receive a maximum of $24,000 to cover tuition, fees, books, room, and board while they pursue their master's degree in history. All fellows must attend an accredited four-week summer institute. Deadline: March 1.

For details, contact the James Madison Fellowship Program, P.O. Box 4030, Iowa City, Iowa 52243, 800/525-6928. Fax: 319/337-1204. On the Web: www.jamesmadison.com. Send E-mail to Recogprog@act.org.

Web Winners

Federal Resources

Hundreds of federal resources, including historical documents, science experiments, and case studies, are now available on a new government Web site. The Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) Web site offers educators and students resources on thousands of topics, all of them contributions from government agencies, from the Department of Education to the White House. The site includes notations from teachers, parents, and students about Internet resources that were particularly useful. Call it up at www.ed.gov/free.

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balances of less than $500.....4.88% balances of $500 to $49,999.....5.41% balances of $50,000 or more.....5.67%
The rates may change after the account is opened. Fees could reduce the earnings of the account. All other bank rates are accurate as of 8/26/98 and, based on a $2,500 minimum opening balance, and the rates may be higher for higher balances. Source – *BISYS Research, Inc. Interest Rate Survey.*

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In the Light Lane

Where Are the Pilgrims From?

Around Thanksgiving time, I was talking with my second and third grade multi-age class about a certain country and what the citizens of that country are called.

This led to more discussion: Americans are from America, Russians are from Russia, and Germans are from Germany.

I thought I would stump my kids, so I asked, "What are people from Turkey called?"

Immediately one student called out, "Pilgrims!"

Amy Cleveland
Sanford, Florida

While standing in line at a lunch counter one Sunday, a young girl and I drifted into conversation about grades, behavior, boys, and teachers.

I mentioned that I was a high school teacher.

At that point, this once talkative youngster moved closer to her mother and exclaimed, "Mom, I thought that lady was a *human being*, but she's a *woman teacher*!"

Everybody turned and stared at me, then we all burst out laughing!

Barbara Spencer
Lafayette, Louisiana

As a new art teacher, I was full of anticipation of the creative and unspoiled expressions of my kindergarten class.

For one lesson, I wanted the children to create their own imaginary landscapes. Boxes of materials—crayons, chalk, markers, stickers, scrap paper, and fabric—were readily accessible for the children to use.

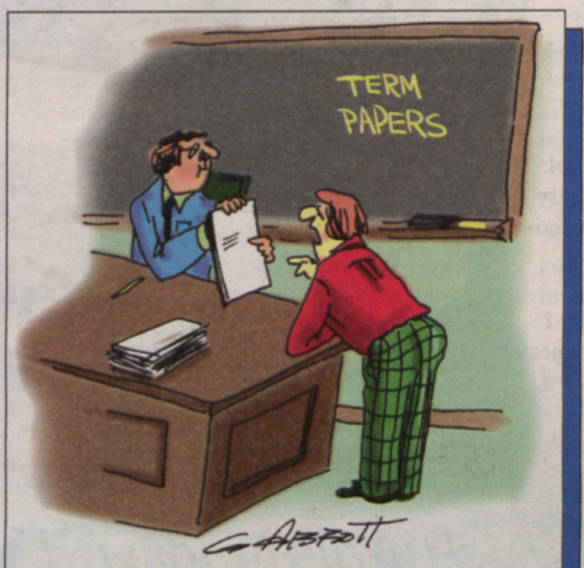
One little boy asked, "Do you have tissue?"

Excited that he wanted to express his creativity in another medium, I replied, "Oh yes, in that box over on the shelf. Just help yourself!"

When I checked on him a few moments later, I was in shock. The whole lower part of his face was dark green! He had used colored tissue paper to blow his runny nose.

I now listen and observe much better.

Heidi Larson
Braintree, Massachusetts



"Let's not think of this as plagiarism. Let's think of it as recycling."

I knew I might have a little extra challenge when I opened my classroom door to greet my new fifth graders on the first day of school and heard one girl exclaim to her mother, who was standing nearby, "Oh mother, she's a *man*!"

Larry Anderson
Redlands, California

For homework, I asked my first graders to come up with five or six synonyms for the word "pretty."

The next morning, I came upon a student who wrote, "Pretty is the same as Miss DiNuzzo, my teacher." I laughed so hard I started to cry.

Since first graders usually get assistance with homework, I asked the student who helped her.

It was her mother's idea, she said—only her mother had wanted the student to answer with *her* name—but the student decided to write her teacher's name instead.

Talk about understanding a concept!

Tara DiNuzzo
Mahwah, New Jersey

During a health lesson, I asked the question, "Why is it important to get a good night's sleep?"

Christian, one of my fourth graders, replied, "Because it's good practice for when you're dead."

Terry Pesta
San Diego, California

After asking my third grade class to line up for recess, I noticed a major body crunch at the front of the line.

"Back up, everyone," I instructed. My line leader very calmly added, "And don't forget to check your rear-view mirror."

Kristina Mead
Ferndale, Washington

One of my kindergartners told her mother that she couldn't wait until next year, because, in first grade, "You get to eat bacteria every day."

It took some questioning for her mom to understand that her daughter meant, "You get to eat in the *cafeteria* every day in first grade."

Mary Ann Tautfest
Canby, Oregon

Early one fall, I was introducing my first graders to the idea that some letters are vowels.

As soon as I said the word "vowel," Cody raised his hand. With great exuberance, he said, "I know a vowel my mama likes!"

Puzzled, I asked which one.

His answer: "Val Kilmer!"

Leigh Kuklis Sammons
Groton, Connecticut

The son of a kindergarten teacher at my school got married. The Monday after the wedding, the teacher described the event to her students.

One boy raised his hand and said, "I was in a wedding one time."

"What did you do?" she asked.

"I was the wheelbearer!" he replied.

Becca Walden
Rainbow City, Alabama

In the "Secret Santa Shop" at our school, two first graders were shopping for gifts for their families.

One student remarked that the items sure were expensive.

The other said, "Yeah, I'm either going to have to get a job or lose some more teeth!"

Brenda Kelley
Toccoa, Georgia

"Miss Farmer, me and you are going to be rich," one of my third graders told me.

When I asked how this would happen, he responded enthusiastically, "I've got me some baseball cards, and I'm gonna marry you!"

Sabra Farmer-Snead
Thorn Hill, Tennessee

Daffy Definitions

During an English review early in the school year, I quizzed my fourth graders about the special name for words such as bookworm and doghouse.

Emphasizing the close link of summer and the beginning of the school year, one of my boys raised his hand, waved it madly, and answered, "It's a two-piece!"

Judy Jenkins
Meridian, Mississippi

Two junior high students were looking at a poster announcing tryouts for the school band.

I overheard one boy ask the other, "Color guard? What's that?"

"I don't know," said the second boy. "I guess it's some kind of laundry detergent."

Janice Emrick
Jerusalem, Ohio

In my fifth grade science class, I introduced a new lesson by asking if anyone could name a disease caused by bacteria or a virus.

I heard the usual responses, such as chicken pox, AIDS, and colds. Then one student replied, "The green disease."

I asked her to explain.

"You know, the disease you get from tick bites," she said.

Then I understood—Lyme disease!

Dianne Coppolino
Oaklyn, New Jersey

During our study of prefixes, a student asked what "discharge" meant.

The child sitting beside him replied, "It means you have to return the things you've charged."

Terry Humphrey
Louisville, Kentucky

Got Laughs?

■ Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

■ Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to **join-lightlane@list.nea.org** (no subject or message needed).

People

The Long **Way Home**

For 110 days, on three continents, and by way of 25 airline flights, Wisconsin art teacher **Margaret Solberg** celebrated her 50th birthday in grand style.

In spring 1997, Solberg packed up her passion for art and headed to Russia to participate in a teacher exchange program. Her plan: To use that assignment as a jumping off point for her "dream of a lifetime" trip.

Thanks to a 'round-the-world plane ticket, the Logan Middle School teacher was able to journey through Egypt, India, Nepal, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, and China before landing back on U.S. soil.

"All alone, sometimes I pinch myself and say, 'I did it!'" says Solberg, who financed her adventure by saving for a year, borrowing money from friends, and renting out her house while she was gone.

Solberg's first stop was Dubna, Russia, where she taught art to second, third, and fourth graders in seven different schools.

She introduced her Russian students to Sculpey modeling clay and shaped magic markers, and, in true exchange fashion, her students taught her something new—how to use gouache, a solid form of watercolor.

Solberg knew little Russian before going, but had no trouble overcoming the language barrier.

"Most people were eager to practice English with me," she says. And, when she had to, she relied on body language.

"That wasn't a problem, because I was dealing with art," Solberg explains.

After three months in Dubna, she headed east—and kept going.

Staying along the way with host families, Solberg got up close and personal with some of the world's wonders—the Sphinx, the Great Pyramids, the Taj Mahal, the Himalayas, and the Forbidden City. She was in Hong Kong two days before it reverted to Chinese control.

Solberg studied art in each country and exchanged techniques and materials everywhere she went.

"I brought along a variety of art supplies to share with every family I stayed with, and we worked on projects together," she says.

Jeff Roberts

Hurdling Toward **Victory**

Alabama physical education teacher **Oluchi Elechi** knows a thing or two about competition. Representing Nigeria at the 1996 Summer Olympics, she placed seventh in the heptathlon.

And she knows a thing or two about clearing hurdles. At her school, she has had to improvise baseball equipment and teach bowling on her school's stage. Even so, Elechi has introduced her students to a wide variety of sports.

Last year, Elechi formed Davis Middle School's first-ever track team—and coached the team to a second-place finish in the Birmingham Middle School Championships.

"I enjoy working with kids because they'll try anything," she says. "I had to ask for permission to start a track team, and now look at what they've accomplished."

But more than winning, it's the rewards of team sportsmanship—meeting new people and performing at ever-higher levels—that Elechi tries to impart to her students.

"I encourage everyone to participate," she says. "I make the games fun so that kids will regret it if they're unprepared and have to sit out."

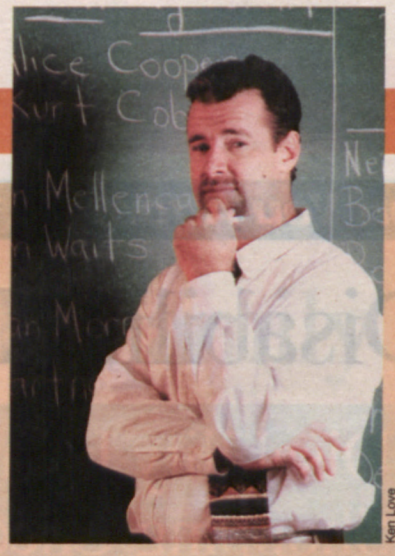
One advantage of being a world-class athlete is that there are few feats—from shot putting to broad jumping—that the 25-year-old can't demonstrate for her students.

"They pick up new skills easily because they want to beat their teacher," says Elechi, who continues to compete in worldwide meets.

The first time she practiced with the track team, her kids couldn't run two laps. Then Elechi ran 10 and challenged them to do four. Now they're going the distance.

And so is Elechi. After teaching and coaching duties, she spends a couple hours each day on her own training—with her eye on competing again for Nigeria in the 2000 Olympics.

Brand-New **Tune**



Ken Love

When Ohio teacher **Steven Smith** listens to the radio, it's more than music to his ears. Smith believes that songwriters are today's poets.

In his English classes at Manchester High School, he uses popular lyrics as a thematic and stylistic bridge to classic poetry and prose, since he knows older works often don't translate well for today's youth.

To share his approach with other educators, Smith developed *Lyricist Review*, an annual curriculum manual full of lesson plans for integrating pop music into literature classes.

Middle schools, high schools, and even colleges in Ohio are using the guide to teach literary analysis and creative writing skills through projects based on lyrics by Bob Dylan, Paula Cole, REM, and others.

"Contemporary music speaks to today's youth and their values," says Smith.

"A lot of lyrics are intelligent and well-structured, and students want them held up as art," he adds. "Maybe teachers should start doing just that."

Smith wishes his own instructors had linked the canon to teen culture. "If a teacher had said, '*Beowulf* is like the Alice Cooper Show,' I would have wanted to read more," he says.

Smith keeps his own music tastes up to date. But while he listens to '90s artists, his students are digging up remastered '60s hits. Lyrics today, poetry tomorrow? Yea, verily. Yeah, man.

For a sample lesson plan, go to the Web at www.lyricistreview.com. To purchase Smith's guide, send $29 ($31.67 for Ohio residents) to Lyricist Review, P.O. Box 2167, North Canton, OH 44720.

Send in the **Clowns**

It's a serious issue, but it's presented with just the right amount of silliness to help it sink in.

Since 1996, thousands of Pennsylvania kindergartners and first graders have learned lessons in school bus safety from a troupe of brightly dressed clowns.

Underneath the greasepaint and funny wigs are school bus drivers who, as the Williamsport Safety Clowns, teach children basics such as where to stand as a bus pulls up to their stop.

The goal, says bus driver **Bonnie Dibble**, is to instill good habits early.

"Catching kids while they're young makes a big difference," she says. "I have all the faith in the world that this program works."

Using props—including a big cardboard bus built by district maintenance and custodial staff—the clowns involve their audiences in roleplaying games.

"We tell kids to stand 10 feet away from the bus at all times," says Dibble (pictured on the right with fellow clown **Terry Hall**), "so we have kids pull on a flexible hose to teach them how far that is."

The Safety Clowns visit elementary schools in their district once a year and take their show on the road often—to neighboring school districts, malls, and safety events.

For their efforts, Dibble, Hall, and the rest of the troupe—Viv Pena, Judy Smith, Connie Mills, Bonnie Van Allan, and Linda Williams—were recognized with a 1997 Governor's Highway Safety Award.

John Whitehead

Steer the **Course**

JJJ Photo

Faster than it takes his students to leave class when the bell rings, Nebraska teacher **Todd Westover** can wrestle a 500- to 700-pound horned steer to the ground.

If it's a good day.

After school, the Central City High School history teacher heads home on the range—literally.

In his backyard arena, he practices the moves that have earned him five steer wrestling titles, including 1997 Nebraska State Rodeo Association Champion.

And those moves are mighty fast. His current best time is a speedy 3.2 seconds.

How do his students feel about the modern maverick?

"Some call me cowboy or redneck," Westover says. "But Central City is a pretty small town and probably a little more tolerant of my vices. A lot of the kids have been to the rodeo and know what I do."

Westover has been competing since the age of seven. "It was the first thing I wanted to do growing up," he declares.

A hectic schedule of teaching and coaching three teams keeps Westover from competing at the national level.

"That's okay," he says, "I get a bigger thrill out of getting kids excited about history."

And students learn something from Westover's bullish feats as well.

"I guess it's encouraging for them to see me compete on a professional level," he says. "They're 16 or 17 and see me out there steer wrestling 'over the hill' at 35."

But Westover, who also skydives in his spare time, insists he's not a daredevil. "I just do the things I enjoy," he says.

Money

Getting Started

How can I earn more on my savings? Friends talk about investments that earn 20 percent—and I'm getting only 4 percent from my savings account.

To earn more, you have to take the giant step from saver to investor. Before you can invest, though, you must build a base and protect what you have. Here are five steps to take:

■ Cover your risks. You need health insurance, of course, and you need disability insurance to protect your income if you can't work. You also need property and liability insurance to protect your home, car, and other possessions. And you need life insurance if you have dependents.

■ Contribute to your retirement plan at work. This is your best first investment, because the money you contribute is deducted from income before you pay taxes on it. And it continues to accumulate without a bite for taxes until you take it out.

■ Pay off your credit card debt. The average American pays $450 a year to carry a balance of $2,500 on two to three credit cards. Paying this off yields a risk-free return of whatever your interest rate is. So paying off $2,500 at 18 percent yields an 18 percent return on that money.

■ Set up an emergency fund of three months' worth of basic living expenses. This money should be in a bank or credit union where you can tap it immediately for unplanned expenses, like brakes for the car.

■ Think about your goals and time horizon. These are the two most important factors in deciding how to set up an investment program.

Did You Know?

. . . that you can order materials directly from the NEA Member Benefits Web site?

From insurance to mutual funds, NEA Member Benefits has a wide range of programs designed especially for NEA members.

Information about these programs is now just a mouse-click away. Go to the new NEA Member Benefits Web site—at www.neamb.com—to find out about the products and services that meet your individual needs.

Can You Afford . . .?

Why Buy Disability Insurance?

If illness or injury laid you low, could you handle it financially?

Quick. What's the greatest risk to a young person just starting out in a new career? A stolen car? An apartment fire?

Not quite. These things are small potatoes compared to loss of income. Your income—and your ability to keep bringing it in and enhancing it—is your single largest asset.

You intend to hold onto your job, of course. And you have considerable control over that. What you have less control over is a possible accident or injury that leaves you unable to work. It could be a skiing accident, a bout of pneumonia, a cycling mishap.

There's one chance in three that you'll be disabled before you retire, according to the Health Insurance Association of America.

That means that you need health insurance to pay medical bills. And you need disability income protection insurance to keep income coming in.

A disability policy replaces a portion of your income for a period when you cannot work because of an accident or illness.

Many people assume that they have adequate coverage though their employer—but 75 to 80 percent of American employers don't offer disability policies, says Northwestern Mutual's Jane Ann Schiltz.

Even if your school district offers a disability plan, there are a few good reasons to consider buying your own:

■ Many employer-sponsored plans pay benefits that are too low for you to live on.

■ If your employer pays the premiums, any benefits you receive are taxable. But if you buy your own policy, the benefits are tax-free.

■ A policy you buy on your own is portable. If you change jobs, you can take it with you.

How do you get disability insurance? First, you need good health and an income—that is, you must be *insurable*. If you wait until you need a policy, you will not qualify.

Unfortunately, disability policies can be complex and expensive.

"There are a lot of bells and whistles on disability policies that significantly increase the premium amount," says financial planner Michael J. Chanson. "Too often people buy features that they're unaware of that add a lot to the premium."

For example, an automatic cost-of-living adjustment can add 50 percent to your premium. A policy that pays benefits for life rather than to age 65 can add 75 percent to the premium.

Both are valuable features, to be sure—but for most of us, they're not affordable. Focus instead on getting the highest possible monthly benefit with plan features that meet your needs.

"Get high basic coverage and leave out some of the extras," advises Glenn S. Daily, author of *The Individual Investor's Guide to Low-Load Insurance Products*.

Daily suggests you spend your disability premium for high basic coverage and coverage for residual disability, which means that you will get a partial benefit if you are partly disabled.

Fortunately for those who would take Daily's advice, there is a trend in the industry to move from Cadillac policies that provide broad benefits to targeted policies that pay a "loss-of-earnings benefit," or a benefit only when you actually lose earnings.

—Mary Rowland

Disability Insurance Shopping Checklist:

Waiting period. This is comparable to a deductible on a medical plan. The longer you wait before drawing benefits, the lower the premium. For affordability's sake, most financial planners recommend a 90-day waiting period. That means you would start collecting benefits four months after you become disabled—the 90-day wait and another 30 days before the insurer writes the check. You would need an emergency fund or help from friends and relatives to tide you over for the waiting period.

Benefit period. You can buy a policy that will pay benefits for one, two, or five years, until you reach age 65, or for your lifetime. A shorter benefit period would cut down on the premium, but planners recommend coverage until age 65. Lifetime coverage is extremely expensive.

Income replacement. Look for a benefit that would replace 60 to 70 percent of your total compensation. If you earn $30,000 a year, your policy should pay $18,000 if you are disabled. Remember that if you're counting on a policy from your employer, you must pay tax on any benefits you receive.

Resources

What would happen if you became disabled and lost your biggest asset—your income?

Most households today rely on two incomes just to get by. Even if you have a little something stashed away, what would happen to your kids' college fund or your retirement savings if you have to use your nest egg to pay bills and make ends meet during a disability?

It's never too soon to invest in income protection. NEA Member Benefits can help.

With the NEA Members Insurance Trust®'s Income Protection Plan, you can protect your salary, your lifestyle, and your family's financial security.

For more information or an application, call NEA Member Benefits at 800/637-4636, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET, Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

How Are You Doing?

Keeping the Family Home

Mortgage insurance policies can offer peace of mind—but are they worth the cost?

Who:
Edward Mason, age 58, associate principal, Clinton High School, Clinton, North Carolina

Financial Goal:
To make sure his wife doesn't have to worry about paying the mortgage if he dies prematurely

Game Plan:
Mason, whose children are grown and living on their own, currently has term life insurance. He's looking into purchasing extra coverage that would specifically pay off his mortgage.

"That way, if something happens to me, my house would be paid for, and it wouldn't be a financial burden on my wife," Mason says. "Otherwise, it would be very difficult for her to take care of the mortgage and all the other bills that would accumulate.

"I think anyone who is head of a household should have such a policy if they owe mortgage payments," he adds.

Mason is considering enrollment in the NEA Home Protection® Plan, a mortgage life insurance plan that he says is "very reasonably priced."

"In this day and age," he notes, "I don't think you can have too much life insurance."

The Experts Say:
If you don't have enough life insurance to pay off the mortgage *and* take care of your family's immediate needs, mortgage insurance may be a good idea.

The term "mortgage insurance" can be misleading, because it can mean two very different things.

Private mortgage insurance, or PMI, doesn't protect your family in any way. It's something the bank gets—and then passes the cost on to you—to protect itself if you're making a down payment of less than 20 percent on a new home.

The kind of mortgage insurance that protects your family is actually a type of term life insurance that will pay off the outstanding balance on your mortgage if you die.

Tyler Hicks

NEA member Edward Mason is thinking about buying extra insurance—just to cover the mortgage.

You can buy this kind of policy when you take out a first mortgage or refinance, or at any time during the life of your loan, as long as your payments are current.

Mortgage insurance can be expensive, and, like any life insurance, the cost increases with age. A 35-year-old with a $100,000 loan would pay about $35 a month, a 45-year-old would pay about $80 a month, and a 65-year-old would pay a monthly premium of about $395.

Despite its high costs, experts generally agree that mortgage insurance can be appropriate for people who don't have regular life insurance or who need additional coverage.

There are several things to keep in mind when deciding whether to purchase a policy:

- Mortgage life insurance has what's referred to as a "declining benefit," which means that its value decreases over the years, as the amount needed to pay off the mortgage decreases. In contrast, the value of a conventional term life insurance policy will stay the same.
- With a mortgage life policy, the insurance benefit *must* go to pay off the mortgage. With a broader term life policy, you can use the money any way you want.
- Because the insurance is tied to your mortgage, the policy ends when you sell your home. If you take out a new policy on your next home, you'll be older and your premium may be higher.
- Don't automatically buy the mortgage insurance that your lender offers. Contact several insurance companies to compare costs and benefits.

Resources

You may already have some life insurance, but, if you were to die, would it be enough to cover major obligations like the mortgage or a college fund—and maintain your family's day-to-day standard of living?

The NEA Home Protection® Plan is the smart way to get the extra life insurance coverage you need to help secure your family's future.

As an NEA member, you can get flexible coverage ranging from $10,000 to $300,000 (depending on your age) and affordable group rates.

With the NEA Home Protection® Plan, you can custom-tailor a plan for your specific needs—without paying for coverage you don't need.

For more about this plan and other NEA life insurance options, call NEA Member Benefits at 800/637-4636.

Continuing On

I enjoy exploring the Internet, but I'm hesitant to make online purchases because I'm concerned about my privacy. What can I do to protect myself?

Whether you want to avoid unwanted solicitations or prevent personal information from being misused by scam artists, there are some things you can do to protect your privacy online. The Online Public Education Network (Project OPEN) suggests that you:

- Protect your password. Never divulge it to strangers, and choose a password that would be hard to guess. The safest passwords are those that mix letters and numbers, that contain at least six characters, and that don't represent a word in any language.
- Recognize that when you post messages to an online bulletin board or participate in a chat session, you may be making your E-mail address available to strangers.
- Know your service provider's policies and exercise your options to control how your personal information will be used. Ask your service provider if it shares its customer list with other companies.
- Take advantage of new software that protects privacy—for example, that allows you to block children from typing in personal information.

For a free copy of Project OPEN's brochure, *Your Privacy When You Go Online*, call 800/466-OPEN. Or, visit Project OPEN on the Web at www.isa.net/project-open.

Retiring Soon?

Thinking about retirement? Don't forget that membership in NEA-Retired offers you a continuation of Association activism, benefits tailored to your needs as a retiree, plus workshops, conferences, and volunteer opportunities.

You'll also receive *NEA Retired* magazine, a bimonthly publication covering Association news and the latest on Social Security, pension, and health issues—as well as feature articles on NEA-Retired members around the country.

Join now as a pre-retired member. Contact NEA-Retired, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. On the Web at www.nea.org/retired.

ONE VOTE

In Congress this past year,

ONE VOTE

stopped a historic proposal to uncrowd the nation's classrooms. On April 22, by a 50-49 vote, the United States Senate killed an amendment that would have, if enacted, helped "hire 100,000 new teachers to reduce class sizes in first, second, and third grades to an average of 18 students per class all across America."

On November 3,

ONE VOTE

can make a difference. Your vote. This November, cast your ballot for the candidates who measure up for children and public education. How can you find which candidates measure up for kids — and which candidates don't? Check with your NEA local affiliate or, to learn how your member of Congress has been voting, check the Web at

www.nea.org/lac/voterec

nea

National Education Association

My Turn

Beyond Age-Old Stereotypes

What do you do when some staffers are older than dirt and some are young enough to play in it?

By Gene Huntley

Mark Hoffman

Gene Huntley teaches eighth grade English at Elkhorn Area Middle School in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. A 31-year veteran, he can be reached at gchuntley@hotmail.com.

Under ideal circumstances, getting a teaching staff to work together as a team is challenging. But when a large segment of your staff rode Hannibal's elephants over the Alps and another large share regards the Vietnam War as ancient history, the task is especially daunting.

This is exactly the situation many school staffs find themselves in today. Lots of veteran teachers worrying about how to pay their kids' college tuition, lots of young staff struggling to pay off their college loans.

The natural tendency in these situations is often the most destructive. It's fast and easy work building concrete walls. Tearing them down can take both tact and dynamite—two things rarely found together in nature.

Age-related cliques are hard to avoid. Certainly the two generations have vastly different interests: Ally McBeal, *20/20*. Roller blade scrapes, shoulder blade aches. Dating, potatoing. Party hardy, hardly party. Third Eye Blind, Three Dog Night. Homer Simpson, Carol Simpson.

It's easy for jealousy to divide generations, too. Veteran staffers envy rookies' idealism, energy, penchant for trying far out new ideas (that seem to work), and comfort level with technology. Besides, they look way too good when talking about getting only three hours of sleep the night before.

Younger staff covet the older teachers' bag of tricks for classroom management, stockpile of time-tested lessons, and collective ability to influence school dynamics and program.

Just the technology issue alone can be a divider, with new staff speaking zip drives, PCI slots, peripherals, and graphics accelerators, while some older staff still think IBM is an acronym for a bowel function.

Fortunately, the intergenerational staff has the potential for being extremely powerful and effective. When two generations cooperate, the school is vibrant, strong, and savvy—able to intertwine the assets of both groups to captivate young minds and boost student achievement.

How can you make it happen? Build on strengths. Here are a few ideas:

- Mentorships are great—when they're two-way. They're less effective if the one doing the mentoring claims to be the incarnation of John Dewey and pretends to have all the answers.
- Get beyond the wet-behind-the-ears stereotype. Newcomers can inject freshness by challenging the traditional way of doing things. That might light a fire under someone's porch, but the exercise of reexamining old assumptions is healthy.
- Get beyond the moldy-oldie stereotype: Veterans have a lot to offer, too. Veterans know how to shred red tape. They know what to do when students conspire to make them appear foolish or seem inadequate. They know how to approach an angry parent who disagrees with their teaching methodology or grading procedures.

I've also seen veteran staff generously open their files to younger staff members, who react as though they've been given the keys to the candy store.

- Orchestrate social activities outside of school. There's simply not enough time at school to get to know each other as more than just teaching automatons. Where to go? Everyone seems to like to eat, so that's a start. If music is a problem, maybe alternating between James Taylor and some techno would work.
- Help each other outside of school. Rookies may be able to help veterans buy a computer or program that VCR. And veterans may be able to help rookies buy a car, deal with an unreasonable landlord, or choose a good doctor.
- Create intergenerational prep times and teaching teams. You could start your own groups. GREEN for Greet Real Eager Energetic Neophytes. Or FOGY for Facilitate Old-timer Gatherings Yourself. An open agenda at meetings could help promote understanding by creating a time and place for honest talk.
- Drop notes of encouragement. Everybody appreciates that, regardless of time served, and when the note spans a generation, it can go a long way toward forming friendships.
- Finally, get to the crucial mindset: You have something to learn from every other staff member, no matter how young or old. Hey, even Hannibal would have done better with some technical support.

You Said It

Bill Fischer, editor

Every so often I get an E-mail or letter from an NEA member that reminds me of the apprehension and uneasiness I felt in the first weeks of my first year of teaching.

Thankfully, I had veteran teachers who helped me through that initial trial period, but that's not always the case.

A woman I met at a meeting recently told me about the experiences of her daughter and a colleague's daughter, both of whom had just completed their first week of teaching. It wasn't a pretty picture she painted.

The woman described how the two new teachers "had been thrown to the wolves," left to fend for themselves by their veteran colleagues.

"I hope we can do something about this so other new teachers won't be ignored," she said.

We don't really have a choice in this. We can't keep losing over 20 percent of new teachers in the first five years of their careers. Fortunately, there are some efforts underway at the local and national level to help beginning teachers.

We're highlighting one example from California on page 10 of this issue.

We'll also be covering, in future issues, the work of a new broad-based coalition of education groups called the Learning First Alliance. This grouping is looking at new ways to help beginning teachers.

The Alliance includes NEA and the American Federation of Teachers, plus 10 other education groups: school boards, PTA, school principals, district administrators, college deans, and others.

These are the members of the education family, the people who do the hiring and the bargaining, the ones who train teachers and evaluate them.

It's this group of educators, traditionally at odds, who together can make that first year of teaching a less nightmarish experience and more what it should be: the start of a long and rewarding career in the classroom.

Bill Fischer

Meet

He knows how to make kids laugh. Now he wants them to get serious about reading.

Doug E. Doug

Cool Readings With a 'Cosby Kid'

If you've seen Doug E. Doug in the films "Cool Runnings" or "That Darn Cat"—or caught him matching wits with the Cos on CBS's "Cosby"—it's no stretch to believe he was once a classroom cut-up.

But when he goes back to school these days—and he does so often—he puts aside the jokes long enough to talk to kids about serious stuff, like the importance of staying in school.

Doug has also lent a hand to NEA's Emergency Commission on Urban Children to promote literacy, including reading to kids at NEA's Read-In in New Orleans in June.

NEA Today*'s Bonnie Gardner met recently with Doug while he was in Washington, D.C. at the commission's "Green Eggs to Hamlet" reception.*

Why spend free time going into schools to talk to kids?
I do it because of the need. I do it because I have to. All of the young people I get in contact with tell me what's going on, and it's distressing. For me to have this much experience with kids and to walk away would leave me in a really sorrowful state.

What do kids tell you?
Economic issues take an overwhelming amount of space in the conversation. That's all they're focused on. Their parents are obsessed with earning, and society tells them that the people to admire are CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and entrepreneurs. But what about your soul?

What do you tell kids?
I tell them the importance of traveling beyond what you're exposed to, and that means meeting new people. That can be a really positive beginning to the rest of your life.

What kind of student were you?
I was very rambunctious. I rebelled a lot. I wanted to challenge my teachers, and my mother had always taught me that it was okay to do so. I went to a Catholic high school, and that caused a big problem for me. Teachers would say, "You don't challenge anything. You're not Jesus."

What does the phrase "This is not the place" mean to you?
The principal once told me "I know you have some behavioral problems, but you're funny. And this is not the place. So put it over here."

It was that adjustment in perspective that changed my life, because I realized there was an outlet for what I was doing. I had been using humor as a way to defend myself, and I turned a survival mechanism into a career.

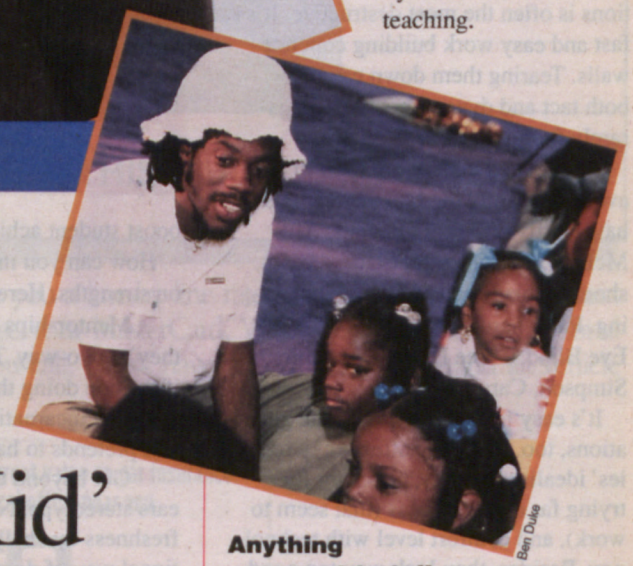
He said, "I'm going to put you on stage. We'll have you perform for the sports banquet." A grown man recognized an ability that I had—that was so empowering. He just said, "This is not the place. *This* is the place." And in that environment, I flourished.

Is that what gave you the confidence to perform in comedy clubs when you were still in high school?
Yes, because I had tested on audiences already. I saw teachers laughing, so I knew that I could make adults laugh. They'd kick me out of classes, but they'd be laughing. I thought, "I must be on to something."

What did you learn while directing your first film, "Citizen James"?
I learned a lot about how people perceive themselves. I made the film in inner-city Brooklyn, and a lot of the young men in the movie wondered why I wasn't giving them guns to hold. For them to believe that they would naturally be associated with violence was really troubling. There's got to be somebody or some group that will show them other ways of seeing themselves.

Do you think you're in that group?
I think so, yeah. People say I do loving portrayals of Black men, and I think, "I'll accept that. Love's not a bad thing to be associated with."

You've said you'd like to one day be a teacher. Why?
I love being around young people, and I believe I have something to contribute. I'm trying to do a kid's show now. It'll have an educational component attached to it—maybe that'll be my introduction to teaching.



Anything you want to tell NEA members?
I wouldn't tell them anything other than a thank you—for staying in a field that is not glamorous. Thank you for not being addicted to what society is addicted to, which is quick results.

And please continue, because it seems like we're running out of people who are willing to do that. My generation's not active, not socially or progressively oriented—just selfish, man.

Resources

■ Want to lend your hand to NEA's literacy efforts? It's not too early to start planning for next year's Read Across America celebration on March 2. Get all the details on the Web at www.nea.org/readacross.

Debate

Should we correct students' grammar all the time, every time?

Robert Chase

Yes

Donna Angle teaches English at Willow Run Project Education, an alternative high school in Michigan. She's also an adult education teacher and community college instructor in the Ypsilanti area. A prolific writer, Angle has written five novels, plus many freelance newspaper and magazine articles.

We have a problem. Too many high school students can't write. They get good grades in English, but they can't tell a sentence fragment from a ham on rye. They graduate, toddle off to college, enroll in Composition 101, then stare, aghast, at their first *D* papers.

"But, but," young Misty Dawn Wunderkind protests, "my English teacher said I'm a wonderful writer!"

Misty may have wonderful ideas, but her mechanics are appalling. She begins with a capital letter and ends with a period two pages later. There's no punctuation, except for apostrophes in all plural nouns, possessive or not. When it comes to verb tenses, she shifts faster than a race car driver.

Who am I to complain? As you may have guessed, I teach English. I correct errors that others have ignored and search for those elusive ideas last seen wandering aimlessly through Gobbledy-Gook National Forest.

It wouldn't hurt to resurrect the practice of calling attention to all writing errors. Let's tell the students what's wrong, why it's wrong, and how to fix it.

"But all those marks will overwhelm students," someone is bound to say. "Why don't we pick a focus for the assignment—say, capitalization—and only mark that? We can get the other stuff later."

But later rarely comes. Misty goes right on making errors and believes that everything is fine. Why shouldn't she? Nobody ever disabused her of that notion.

"But I don't have time to do all that grading," someone else might say. "I have 30 students (or 40 or 90)."

That's a legitimate problem. Writing teachers should have fewer students. Unfortunately, it's the rare administrator who recognizes the wisdom of paring down class size.

In the meantime, we still have work to do. My students write a lot. It takes time to grade their work, but that's what I signed up for.

I have put together packets for my students about grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. They are concise for quick reference and explain when to use a semi-colon, how to use 'table' as three parts of speech, and what agreement means.

Students write first drafts, I read and mark them, and they revise. Some people grumble about the extra work, but if they do it, they improve.

"Oh, my kids make grammar errors, and the spelling isn't perfect, but that's what computers are for," another teacher might say. "Besides I couldn't burst Misty Dawn's balloon. She feels so good when she gets an *A*. After all, are the mechanics all that important?"

Yes. Good ideas get lost in incoherence. English is a wonderful language if it's used well, but it's going to degenerate into lip-plucking gibberish if we aren't careful.

"But all those red marks!" another teacher says. "You know what they told us in ed psych about red ink!"

I have yet to see a student suffer a nervous breakdown over a marked-up paper. Besides, along with corrections, I always give praise.

As one young man rather indelicately put it, "I don't give a bleep if the ink's red. A mistake's a mistake. Show me how to fix it."

As for Misty Dawn's feel-good *A*, she'll feel better about a good paper. Let's give her the skills to write it.

Dixie Wright

No

Katherine Wright Knight teaches high school English in Little Rock, Arkansas. A local and state Association leader, Knight sits on NCATE's Board of Examiners and presents dozens of professional development workshops to other teachers. She can be reached at wrightknight@aristotle.net.

It can be more destructive than constructive to attempt to correct every grammatical error students make in speech or writing.

Take a second to imagine teaching a Ghandi or a King. What do you think would have happened if every time young Martin put forth an effort to speak, he was interrupted? What if all his ideas had been rewritten by a mentor or teacher? What if every time he spoke, someone had corrected every error—or perceived error—in content, word choice, or grammatical usage?

Is it possible he might have become stifled, strangled, unnerved, or shy? His self-esteem and fervor might well have been devastated. He might never have become the man so many of us knew and loved.

It's not any different with the students we have in our classrooms.

Several years ago, I had a student I'll call Nataki. She was unable to orally articulate a complete thought. Sometimes, it was a struggle for me to sit through her rambling—even when she was just asking a question.

But what purpose would it have possibly served, it I had stopped Nataki every time she made a mistake? How would the other students have perceived her? How would she have perceived herself? And what would Nataki and the other students have thought of me?

Realistically, it's not possible to correct years of damage, poor home teaching, or poor schooling during one speech. Instead, I offered Nataki an opportunity to improve her skills. We met weekly to practice, and I gave her practice materials for the summer and for her remaining high school years.

I offered Nataki an individual plan for a problem that interfered with effective communication. It deserved an individual strategy.

A blanket policy—"correct students all the time, every time"—won't work for a lot of reasons:

- Learning can't occur where there is no encouragement and no respect. Too often, students believe we have no respect for what they believe, what they say, and who they are. We need to show them otherwise.
- It's important not to interrupt the message and the messenger if you want complete thoughts or the best ideas. You know what I mean if you've ever been in the middle of a comment when the phone rings.

Constant corrections hurt more than students' self-esteem. A student's ideas—when interrupted abruptly, frequently, or rudely—may be lost forever. That shouldn't happen in a place where teaching and learning occurs.

- Students will learn more when we offer them the opportunity to correct their own mistakes. And they'll learn from their peers—if they learn in an environment where they can correct each other without fear of embarrassment or intimidation.
- Students shouldn't be treated as blank slates. They bring a wealth of resources to the language arts classroom that can be tapped. When teachers are trained to tap into students' creativity, enthusiasm, and depth of feeling—not turn it off—they'll be stunned by how much learning will take place.

A final note to the unbelievers: Nataki graduated with honors and is now in medical school.

What's Your Opinion?

Should we correct students' grammar every time?

To vote, visit our Web site at **www.nea.org/neatoday** and see the results instantly.

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65% Yes **35% No**

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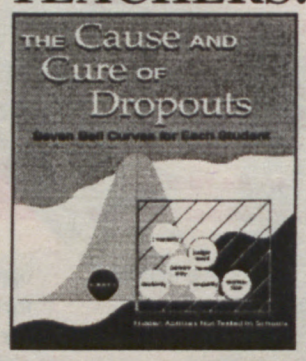

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Announcements

The ESP Information System

NEA has created the **ESP System** to gather information about key education support personnel issues from many sources and quickly put that information into the hands of members and staff who need it most.

The system is interative and will continue to evolve, guided by its users. Right now there are four different components: written materials, such as the **ESP Data Book,** and a manual on **strategies for combatting privatization** of ESP jobs, an **ESP section online,** and **internet mailing list** where staff and members can discuss issues, and a Web site at www.nea.org/esp.

NEA's job is to act as a 'stage manager,' making sure that everything is working smoothly and responding to the needs of our members.

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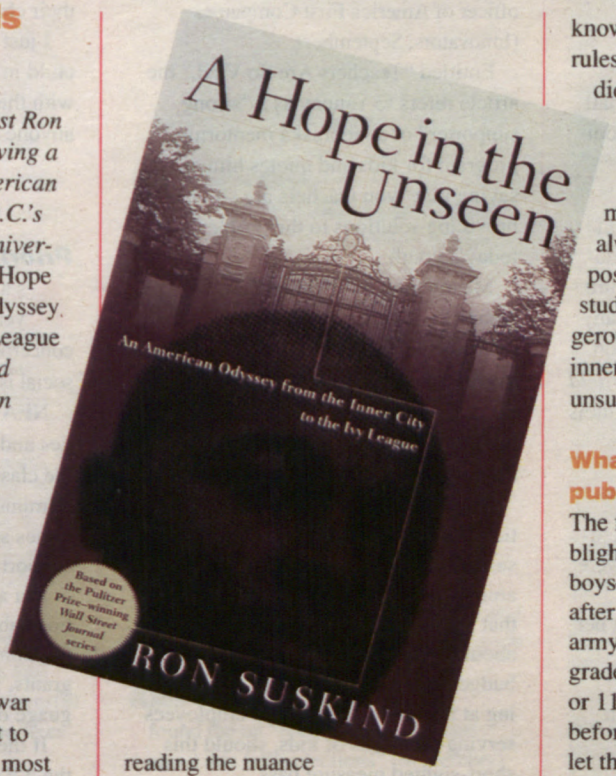
Books

Finding 'A Hope in the Unseen'

Can inner-city kids beat the odds?

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ron Suskind spent three years following a bright, determined African-American teen from one of Washington, D.C.'s worst high schools to Brown University. His stunning new book: A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League *(Broadway Books, $25). Suskind spoke recently with NEA's Susan Gilman.*


A Hope in the Unseen
An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League
Based on the Pulitzer Prize–winning Wall Street Journal series
RON SUSKIND

What drew you to the story?

The idea was to go into a toxic inner- city school and see what it really takes to learn. My roommate at the time had just come back from reporting in Bosnia. I said, "Well, there's a war going on right here, too." I went to Ballou High School [one of the most troubled high schools in Washington, D.C.] and I found undercover honors students, like Cedric Jennings.

What do teachers do that discourages kids like Cedric?

Sometimes they overly praise kids for modest achievements. That's not giving the kids enough credit. These are kids whose lives literally depend on reading the nuance of a comment someone has made. Their aptitude in discerning the subtleties within issues is probably greater than yours as a teacher or mine.

How can teachers help urban kids succeed?

Expose kids to how the world works beyond the ghetto. Many kids don't know anyone who's played by the rules and won. Kids at Cedric's school didn't know how the principal could own a Lexus. They figured he was dealing drugs.

The best teachers are hope-mongers. The key, I think, is always to monitor the sense of possibility and the hopefulness in the student—and not let it drop to dangerously low levels. Levels of hope in inner cities are often disastrous and unsuitable to teenagers.

What will improve urban public schools?

The forces that buffet urban kids in blighted areas—especially urban boys—beset them with greatest force after sixth grade. There's a whole army of Cedrics at the end of sixth grade. But almost all are gone by 10th or 11th grade. We've got to reach them before seventh grade. The key is not to let them slip disastrously far behind.

Adults need to see and understand what it feels like to be 12 in an inner-city school. We need to trust that the decisions kids make are as important as the prescriptions that we offer them from on high. Only through a genuine understanding of the dialogues that go on between kids in the hallways and after class will we truly be able to help turn them away from despair.

NEA Professional Library Top 10 Bestseller List

1 How To Get Grants and Free Stuff. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Master grant writers share practical tips and winning strategies for getting grants and free stuff for your classroom. (#2914-3-00-FB)

2 Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers. Mary Clement. ($4.50) This checklist reveals the secrets of surviving the first year of teaching. (#2153-3-00-FB)

3 MegaSkills Moments for Teachers. Dorothy Rich. ($9.95) This book shows what you can do to turn everyday problem situations into opportunities for personal and professional growth. (#2006-5-00-FB)

4 The First Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8). Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. Includes time-saving ideas, tips for working with parents, and more. (#1862-1-00-FB)

5 Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers. Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray. ($4.50) Loaded with practical advice, this Checklist Series booklet for beginning teachers is a great gift for that new colleague down the hall. (#2151-7-00-FB)

6 Countdown to the First Day of School. Leo M. Schell & Paul Burden. ($4.50) A must-have checklist for every beginning elementary school teacher. (#2150-9-00-FB)

7 The Discipline Checklist: Advice from 60 Successful Elementary Teachers. Ken Kosier. ($4.50) Sixty top teachers share their secrets of classroom management and suggestions for motivating today's students. (#2152-5-00-FB)

8 Moving to the Block: Getting Ready to Teach in Extended Periods of Learning Time. Fleming, Olenn, Schoenstein, and Eineder. ($4.50) This compact book answers your questions about block scheduling. (#2159-2-00-FB)

9 Quit it! A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Students in Grades K-3. Froschl, Stein, et al. ($15.95) Now you can "bullyproof" your K-3 classroom with this comprehensive teacher's guide. (#1881-8-00-D)

10 Peer Support: Teachers Mentoring Teachers. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Who benefits when teachers reach out to their colleagues for advice and support? Students! (#2913-5-00-FB)

This month's rankings are based on last month's sales for all books published by the NEA Professional Library, a service for all 2.4 million NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community.

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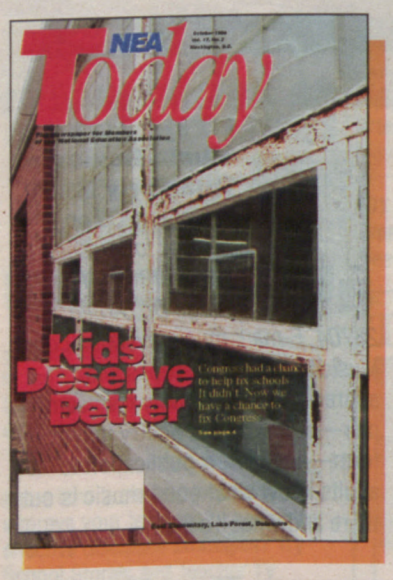
Three Plays in Two Languages Alice Morin. *Los Abuelos Press, 53 pp., $14.95 plus $2 s&h to Los Abuelos Press, P.O. Box 9301, Palm Springs, CA 92263, 760/770-7474.* A collection of original one-act plays with dialogue in both English and Spanish. For students in grades 6-12, the plays promote tolerance and awareness of history and literature.

Part of the Deeper Sea Lois Marie Harrod. *Palanquin Press, 88 pp., $12 plus $1.50 s&h to Palanquin Press, English Dept., University of South Carolina, Aiken, SC 29803.* Harrod observes everything from sea creatures to the art of M.C. Escher and Henry Moore in this collection of graceful poetry.

Super Cowboys ***Fred Gilistic and Espie Alydoecious.*** Myrna Bodner. *Bodner Books, 29 pp., $5.95 plus $1.50 s&h to Bodner Books, 1591 Cypress Pt. Dr., Upland, CA 91786.* In this children's poetry book about believing in yourself, two super cowboys demonstrate their prowess at saving the day.

Caleb Powers And the Mountain Army. Mayor Jim Short. *Jessica Publishing, 224 pp., $12.95 plus $3.05 s&h, 606/286-5201.* Caleb Powers—sentenced to hang in 1908 but elected to Congress in 1910. A true historical profile of dramatic turn-of-the-century events in Kentucky.

Letters



Buckle Up?

Seat belts on school buses might make sense in a perfect world (Debate, October), but they don't make any sense in the real world for several reasons.

First of all, any requirement mandating the use of seat belts on buses is unenforceable. Once the driver pulls away, it becomes almost impossible to make sure that all seat belts are fastened.

Second, what about liability? If an accident occurs, and some children are injured because they aren't wearing their seat belts, who's liable? Would the driver be held legally responsible?

Third, the cost of adding seat belts to bus seats is a concern in many "strapped-for-cash" school districts. Where is it on the priority list—above textbooks but below salaries?

Fourth, if drivers must wait for children to fasten their seat belts at each stop, they would experience significant delays. Time constraints add stress, carelessness, and shortcuts on safety.

Our time and money would be better spent on hiring, training, and retaining quality bus drivers and bus aides.

Irene Sayers
Plano, Texas

I agree with the debater who argued that a standard metal buckled lap belt can pose a danger in itself.

But the answer is certainly not to allow students to smash into the seats in front of them or get tossed around the bus—which would happen if the bus was hit from the side, tipped, or rolled over, and the students were not somehow secured.

Let's change the term "seat belt" to "safety restraint" and start thinking about options that are a bit more creative. As a starting point, think of the many safety restraint designs found in modern theme park thrill rides. Designers and engineers can apply their talents to school buses, too.

The debate should not be whether restraints are needed but which restraint designs will work best.

Ron Waterman
Readsboro, Vermont

Good News

What a good feeling to read about John Goodie, the former football player who now works as a high school security chief in Arizona (People, September).

His previous NFL sports background could have merely led to a life of hedonism. Not so for John Goodie! I'm sure that he must now touch and guide many young Americans in the right direction.

V.L. Fairfield
Bloomington, Illinois

Money vs. Principle

The two teachers who debated whether schools should sign exclusive contracts with cola companies were insightful (Debate, September).

One pointed out all the things that her school can do with Pepsi money. Of course, we can all imagine lists of terrific things our schools could do with more money.

But shouldn't our society expect principled behavior from public schools? Is the debater saying the principle doesn't matter as long as the money's good?

It reminds me of the story about the man who walked up to a woman sitting alone at a bar and asked whether she would sleep with him for a million dollars.

She looked him over a little and then said, "Well, yes, I guess I would sleep with you for a million dollars."

Then he asked, "Would you sleep with me for 20 bucks?"

Indignant, she shot back, "What do you think I am?"

"We've already established what you are," he replied. "Now we're just negotiating price."

Thomas Zachek
Hubertus, Wisconsin

All Talk

It was with more than a sense of irony that I read excerpts from a speech by Mike Yanney, chair and chief executive officer of America First Companies (Innovators, September).

Entitled "Teachers Are So Vital," the article refers to Yanney as a "strong supporter" of a Nebraska mentoring program for kids and quotes him as saying that "you teachers are so vital" to providing solutions to the problems of today's youth.

Meanwhile, on Election Day, Nebraskans will vote on a constitutional measure that will severely limit state aid to education, most probably end property tax relief to the citizens of Nebraska, and possibly devastate public education in this state.

The Nebraska Department of Education has projected that, should the measure pass, the Lincoln public schools alone will lose more than $32 million—that's 29.7 percent of our tax base. With about 80 percent of the local school budget going to salaries, we'll be looking at the loss of many vital employees serving the needs of kids, should this short-sighted measure pass.

Now to the irony: Yanney has personally contributed $67,350 to getting the measure passed.

Sure, we need "strong supporters" to meet the challenges of educating today's youth. But based on deeds, not words, it seems Yanney doesn't understand the issues and isn't making the kind of commitment to public schools that he could and should.

Dan Studer, president
Lincoln Education Association
Lincoln, Nebraska

Danger Signs

Your last issue listed several ideas for preventing school violence (Inside Scoop, Health, Innovators). But what should a teacher do when, after many meetings with parents, they still refuse to see the danger signals their child is displaying and don't take action?

Both the principal and counselor have been involved, and the parents finally put their child in a private school.

I just hope that I don't read about this child in the paper "going off," complete with the parent's comment: "Why didn't anyone try to warn me?"

Carrie Lee
Incline Village, Nevada

TODAY'S YOUTH ISN'T HUNG UP ON RACE
WE DON'T THINK IN TERMS OF STEREOTYPES
ONLY YOU PEOPLE IN YOUR 30's 40's AND 50's DO THAT.
YOU'RE A BIGOTED BUNCH OF GEEZERS.
Chip Bok, *Akron Beacon Journal*

Priorities

As a public school teacher in my 34th year in the classroom, I'm very concerned with NEA's stand on certain social issues (Resolutions, September).

NEA seems more interested in minorities and worldwide issues than it does in the classroom. I'm not in favor of discrimination of any kind, but are these issues so important that NEA has to support them?

I'm also concerned about NEA resolutions about sex education, reproductive freedom, education for illegal immigrants, and English as the official language of our nation.

If the government implements all of the NEA resolutions, public schooling as we know it would sink faster than the *Titanic* and go broke faster than Wall Street in 1929.

If we could join just our state and local Associations, I think the NEA leadership might get a rude awakening.

Dan Ullery
Brazil, Indiana

A Day in the Life

The story of Tennessee music teacher Vincent Dial's use of behavior contracts (Cover story, September) made me think about one of my own students.

A colleague and I direct an after-school homework support club called "Study Buddies" for struggling fourth and fifth graders. Before joining the club, students and their parents must sign contracts that specify acceptable behavior standards.

On one particular evening, several students were having difficulty behaving. One young girl had tested my patience to the limit and was soon to be a recipient of our infamous "blue sheet." Any student receiving three blue sheets must be dropped from the program.

As I ushered Julie (not her real name) out into the hall, she burst into tears and pleaded with me to give her another chance.

I calmly but firmly told her that I couldn't back down from our policy. The tears streamed down her face, and she sank to the floor. Then she heaved a great sigh, grabbed the blue sheet out of my hand, gathered her things, and stomped out of the room.

Later that evening, I wondered just

what Julie's fate had been when she got home. I sat down and wrote her a note about respect and responsible behavior. I included warm words of encouragement for future positive behaviors.

The next day, Julie came up to me and gave me a big hug. She thanked me for the note and said her behavior would improve. And, for the most part, it has.

A few months later, I was assisting Julie with her reading homework when she accidentally knocked over her backpack, spilling its contents all over the floor.

As I bent down to help her gather her papers, I spotted a rather frayed card. It was, in fact, the same note I had given her weeks ago. The ink was smeared and the edges were tattered.

As I handed it to Julie, she blushed and, with downcast eyes, remarked, "Uh, Mrs. Butterworth, I kept your note to me. I carry it around in my backpack every day just to remind me that someone cares about me."

With a lump in my throat, I stammered some appropriate response and was once again reminded of the powerful influence we educators have in the lives of those we teach.

Darcey Butterworth
Apple Valley, Minnesota

Start Smart

Your story "Start Smart" was a real eye-catcher (Cover story, September). The picture of Vincent Dial on the cover shows a determined music teacher.

After reading the article, I was moved to contact Dial concerning his written behavior contracts for students. He was kind enough to send a copy, many aspects of which can be used in our district's instructional music program.

It's important for students and parents to realize what's expected—academically and behaviorally. Thank you, Vincent Dial and *NEA Today*!

Richard Groller
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Hurrah! Hurrah! Many thanks for printing "Start Smart: Ten Tips for Establishing Harmony in the Classroom" (Cover story, September). In the 24 years that I taught ninth grade world history, I sent only five students to the office.

I did it by using the 10 tips you mention and a few more. My inspiration? My three active and bright sons, who often dropped pearls of wisdom.

I'm convinced that Vincent, my middle son, and his pals often made their teachers think of early retirement. But one day they sat on his bedroom floor and presented skits on the do's and don'ts of teaching.

Their first big don't: "Never lose your cool, raise your voice to a screech, or put on a show for the class." They told me that kids are often bored in school, and to relieve the boredom, they torture, torment, or simply "tork" off the teacher for entertainment. No matter what happens, they said, "turn it around and use it in a positive way."

I've been taking that advice ever since.

Charlotte Della Polla
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Wish Granted

While reading an issue of *NEA Today*, I saw a small article in the "Heads Up" section inviting folks to apply for Teaching Tolerance grants. I wanted my all-white first graders to learn about and appreciate other cultures, so I applied.

I got the grant, taught my students about diversity and respect through a theme unit on soup, and was written up in *Teaching Tolerance* magazine this fall.

You help many children by including grant information in your publication. Keep up the good work.

Kathy Rusert
Mena, Arkansas

Kids and Clinton

I found the ad "Kids are why we care about this fall's elections" (September) ironic in light of all the news coverage devoted to the Clinton escapades of the last six months.

This NEA-supported president led the country to believe he was genuinely concerned about the young people of this nation. But, by his actions, he contradicts himself. He has wounded our country, let the youth of this nation down, and duped NEA officials and their followers who supported him.

I'd like to see a public statement from NEA officials regarding their disappointment in the Clinton administration. In the future, I only pray that NEA supports political candidates who will selflessly serve our youth and our country.

As you said in your ad: "Kids can't vote. They depend on us." Do better next time.

Pamela Faehnle
Chardon, Ohio

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

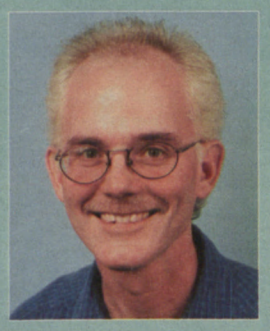
- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
- By E-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By FAX: 202/822-7206
- By Phone: 202/822-7201

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

A Letter from: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Where Vouchers Thrive

By Bob Peterson



Eight years ago, when vouchers first came to Milwaukee, only a handful of schools and a couple hundred students were affected.

This June, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that giving tax dollars to religious schools is constitutional.

Now, nearly 85 schools and more than 6,000 students are enrolled in the voucher program. Now, public money—perhaps as much as $25 million or $30 million—will leave public schools and be sent to private ones. Now, *all* public school staffers and students will be affected.

And the situation promises to get worse: This year, 300 students attend three city-run charter schools, all of which are merely private schools that "converted" to "public." Next year, our mayor promises up to 30 more.

What's happening here is the logical conclusion of years of posturing by our governor and mayor, millions of dollars from pro-voucher foundations, and merciless attacks on public schools by the media.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling is merely the icing on the cake. The only question left: Will the U.S. Supreme Court light the candles? If it does, what's happening here will happen in your community, too. The very concept of public education is at stake.

If that sounds like rhetoric to you, rest assured it did to me, too, 10 years ago. Not any more.

In Milwaukee, the voucher movement is already eroding:

■ *Public school funding.* Voucher schools receive $4,950 for each student who is from a family that earns no more than 175 percent of the federal poverty threshold. Charter schools receive $6,100, and their students don't need to meet any income requirement.

Only an estimated 17 percent of the current voucher and charter students left public schools. The rest previously attended private schools or are just entering the system.

So, in reality, the loss of nearly $25 million is accompanied by a loss of only a bit more than 1,000 students—an average of six per school. Assuming a $25 million loss in revenue is spread across our 160 public schools, each would lose approximately $156,000—a hefty price for losing six students.

No one knows how Milwaukee's public schools will deal with losing $25 million in funds next year—state aid is always given one year late. But you can imagine.

■ *Public school accountability.* Under Milwaukee's program, voucher schools don't have to obey the state's open meetings and records laws, hire certified teachers—or even require a college degree. Voucher schools also don't have to release information on employee wages or benefits, administer the statewide tests required of public schools, or release test scores and attendance figures.

The only requirement: a "financial and performance evaluation audit" of the entire voucher program to be submitted to the legislature in 2000.

■ *Public school's promise of equal opportunity.* Special education students, who account for 15 percent of Milwaukee public school students, will not get the services they need from voucher or charter schools. Those who run these schools assert that it's the public school's responsibility to serve those students and foot the bill.

In addition, some white parents will use voucher and charter schools the way they used private schools—to get around desegregation. The public schools, for instance, are about 60 percent African American. At some of the most popular parochial high schools, only 3 percent to 5 percent of the students are African American.

The Milwaukee example shows what could happen in many communities in this country. Educators need to wake up to this pending danger, redouble our efforts to improve public education, and make alliances with parents and community groups to defend public schools. We can no longer afford to ignore this threat.

Bob Peterson is a fifth grade teacher and an editor of the progressive education quarterly Rethinking Schools. *He can be reached at REPMilw@aol.com.*

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